TRANSATLANTIC ALIENS

MODERNISM, EXILE, AND CULTURE IN MIDCENTURY AMERICA

WILL NORMAN

VISIT…

Transatlantic Aliens

Hopkins Studies in Modernism
Douglas Mao, *Series Editor*

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Modernism, Exile, and Culture in Midcentury America

Will Norman

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For Robin and Diana

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Transatlantic Aliens

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Introduction

The Great Flight of Culture

In December 1941, just as the events of Pearl Harbor drew the United States into World War II, Henry Luce's *Fortune* magazine ran a feature entitled "The Great Flight of Culture." Its subject was the wave of European migrants that had recently been arriving on American shores: "It may prove to be one of the most significant mass movements in history—not quantitatively, but qualitatively. For this is not just people fleeing famine or oppression toward a traditional asylum. This is a transplantation of a whole culture from one continent to another."[1] The author of the piece saw this flight of intellectuals, writers, and artists from the turmoil across the Atlantic as both a great opportunity and a grave burden for the United States. The question the article posed was "whether, during American trusteeship, Europe's transplanted culture will flourish here with a vigor of its own, or languish for lack of acceptance, or hybridize with American culture, or simply vanish from the earth." The tone of the article and its images of husbandry may seem melodramatic and crude from our current vantage point, but they indicate the stark terms in which the intellectual migration was conceived in its time, and the value attached to the European cultural tradition in US public discourse. The true purpose of the article, it becomes clear as one reads, is to offer its American readers a way of negotiating the alienating forms of European modernist art, which "has developed in certain definite directions that are not generally familiar to or accepted by large portions of the American public." "For some unexplained reason," it ponders, "the American who insists on having his art 'look like something' is the same American who loves the fantasy of Donald Duck and the cartoon strip." The relationship between American mass culture and European modernism was already in 1941 being presented as a dialectical opposition that might be resolved through mutual accommodation. The importance of this

encounter between the European bearers of culture and the popular sensibilities of the New World could not have been stated more boldly—the United States had been given "custodianship for a civilization."

In this book, I recover the stakes of this crisis moment in transatlantic cultural history by returning to the questions posed by the *Fortune* article. What was the fate of European high culture in the United States at midcentury, and how did its representatives negotiate the dramatic shifts in the cultural field they entered? I argue that, counter to the dominant narrative of the "Intellectual Migration" of the 1930s and early 1940s, the experience of displacement brought about in a range of transatlantic figures a complex engagement with the emergence of a fully fledged mass culture in the United States, which in several cases had a lasting effect on postwar art and literature.[2] Until relatively recently, the received account of European exiles in midcentury America has been built upon potent emblems of ivory-tower isolation; a prominent example is Theodor Adorno and Thomas Mann working together on *Doktor Faustus* in a suburb of Los Angeles, intent on shutting out the effects of a pernicious culture industry operating around them.[3] Alternatively, one might think of French surrealists in New York, blithely indifferent to American culture, waiting for the opportunity to return to Paris as soon as World War II concluded.[4] Such images have contributed to a persistent misconception by which the United States at midcentury functions as modernism's banal other, its brash consumerism, burgeoning entertainment industry, and perceived lack of cosmopolitanism forming a backdrop against which European tradition could perform its destiny. This is cultural history as written by Humbert Humbert in Nabokov's *Lolita*, but without the self-parodic jokes.

In this book, I reorient our perspective on the midcentury cultural field by showing how it was shaped by dynamics that have not been accounted for, occluded as they have been by our inheritance of Cold War literary criticism and art history, with its reified categories of nation and cultural hierarchy. In case studies of C. L. R. James, Theodor Adorno, George Grosz, Raymond Chandler, Vladimir Nabokov, Simone de Beauvoir, and Saul Steinberg, I examine how these figures responded to US mass culture and adapted their aesthetic and intellectual practices to take into account distinctive features of the cultural landscape, such as trips to the drugstore and movie theater, or the dazzling emptiness of neon lights and gigantic billboard advertisements. Mass culture is to be grasped in several different ways if we are to understand its relationship to individuals and their work. It must be

understood both in the terms proposed by American intellectuals of the period—that is, as an abstract stratum defined by its distinction from high art—and as the source of concrete experiences with their own singular aesthetic and affective charges. But we need further to bear in mind the sense in which, in the mid-twentieth-century United States, mass culture emerged as, in Michael Denning's formulation, "the very element in which we all breathe," an indissoluble and unavoidable constituent of variegated life across the nation, whether one's personal hero was Paul Valéry or Rudi Vallée.[5] In this last sense, we move away from conceiving of mass culture as represented by aesthetic production—best-selling fiction, Hollywood films, billboard advertisements—and entertain a more capacious definition in which it comes to represent the structuring of everyday life by relentless commodification. Only by moving between all three of these culture concepts will we be able to reach a worthwhile understanding of the impact of American exile on the work of intellectuals, artists, and writers.

American mass culture is to be contrasted with European culture in the distinctive styles and contents of its practitioners—say, for example, the kitsch realism of Norman Rockwell's celebrations of small-town life in Vermont or the cartoon violence of Chester Gould's *Dick Tracy* comic strip—as well as in the sense of uneven development, by which we are reminded of the incremental and often ambivalent awareness in European nations after both World Wars of Americanization as modernity itself, marching inexorably across the globe under the signs of first Fordism and then Hollywood and Coca-Cola. As late as 1958, Dwight Macdonald echoed some of this European perspective back to his own nation, writing on his return from a year in London and Tuscany a vitriolic polemic against the United States, which, he claimed, despite being the wealthiest and most equitable in history, was "a people with no style." "The same *tendencies* exist in Europe," he noted, "the same destruction of the order of the past, physical and social, by the cancerous growth of mass society—but they are much less advanced."[6] Macdonald's article exemplifies how intellectual discourse of the time often conceptualized mass culture as a problem of style and of modernization, without always fully working through the implications of the move. Atlantic crossings thus tended to cause comparative interferences and disorientations registered in geographical space and historical time, which in their turn had the potential to create some fascinating disjunctive effects. Dostoevsky is discovered haunting a Hollywood musical, the aesthetics of French symbolism flicker rhythmically among the neon signs of a

small town in the dead of night, and echoes of Mondrian's grids are observed not in the Museum of Modern Art but in the form of a boardroom sales chart. The strange afterlives of European modernism and the historical avant-garde, I argue, are to be found in such disorienting and uncanny juxtapositions, which predate the advent of postmodernism, pop art, and counterculture. They inhabit instead those fraught and indeterminate years between the rise of National Socialism and Stalinism in the 1930s, and the birth of the New Left in the late 1950s, the years Kenneth Fearing referred to in 1944 as "this curious interim between two ages, when history has dropped the curtain upon one of them but seems in no hurry to give the next one its shape and color."[7]

One of the great achievements of modernist scholarship over the last twenty years or so has been to establish various ways in which the canonical works of high modernism were always knowingly complicit with their commodified others and took commodity forms of their own.[8] Thanks to such scholarship, we now understand much more about how Pound and Eliot marketed their poetry using deluxe editions, about Gertrude Stein's entrance into the world of celebrity, and about Picasso's accomplished self-fashioning in the mass media. So pervasive, it transpires, was the modernist entanglement with commodity culture, that it seems unlikely that anyone ever believed it might be otherwise.[9] And yet this is precisely what happened in the United States in the mid-twentieth century, when a small number of influential critics and scholars managed to shape our understanding of what modernism is by insisting on its radical autonomy from the social and even by using it as a defensive weapon in a heroic struggle against mass culture. As Seth Moglen has shown in an excellent revisionist study, there are narratives of interwar modernism that have been deliberately buried by this postwar critical hegemony.[10] In turning to the émigré art and culture of midcentury, however, we cannot wishfully blank out that moment of New Critical and formalist ascendency (tempting though it may be) for the simple reason that such a move would also obscure the very object we wish to see. Accordingly, important figures in what we now recognize as the cultural Cold War, such as Clement Greenberg and Dwight Macdonald, are recurring points of reference throughout this book, as are the American institutions that helped them to achieve such widespread legitimacy, such as *Partisan Review*, the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). I will not rehearse here the history of the mass culture debates or of the rise of the New York intellectuals, familiar

stories as they are.[11] I do want to emphasize, however, that the émigré figures I treat in this book were themselves caught up in this strange moment, being part of a process in which their own artistic and intellectual tradition was reappraised and recreated in a transatlantic light. They found themselves at once to be both creative subjects and premature historical objects, having experienced the era of modernism twice, as it were, as European tragedy in the interwar period and as American farce in the forties and fifties. Kafka and Proust take on different meanings for Adorno once he recognizes them in cheap paperback translations on the shelves of pseudo-Bohemians in postwar Los Angeles. Mondrian is never the same for Steinberg after his official canonization at MoMA at 1945. The photomontage in the United States, as Grosz found out in the 1930s and again in the 1950s, was always both old and new at the same time.

In the course of this book, then, we stand to learn something about the broad history of modernism itself and in particular about the way the "flight of culture" and the pivotal decade of the 1940s signal both its end and its beginning.[12] I wish to illuminate a historical truth about the cultural field that became obscured once New Criticism and aesthetic formalism became accepted as orthodox early during the Cold War. In the turmoil of the 1940s, it was far from clear what constituted a legitimate aesthetic regime and what didn't, whether an American crime novel could be considered high literature or a *New Yorker* cartoon be considered high art. This moment is one of the most complex and least understood in modern US cultural history, characterized as it is by a radical instability that poses great challenges to the scholar. Rather than attempt to impose a retrospective order on a fluid midcentury cultural field, my aim here is to use concrete analysis of creators and their works, institutions, and reception to map out shifting patterns and contradictions. In this respect, the book echoes work undertaken by Michael Denning, George Lipsitz, and Alan Wald in their formidable archaeologies of socialist culture in the United States, and indeed their reconstruction of buried class formations in the 1940s has been valuable to my research.[13] The focus of my analysis, however, is ultimately on transnational rather than national dynamics, in the conviction that the United States' changing relationship with the rest of the world remains underplayed as a major source of change, not just in particular creative works but in the very structure of the cultural field.[14] When the French novelist and intellectual André Malraux spoke in January 1945 of a new "Atlantic Civilization" being born out of the global crisis, "different from all its begin-

nings, even from the United States," he, like many others, imagined a radically new, transnational configuration of culture.[15] Arguably, his utopian vision never found fruition, and yet it remains necessary to recover and reexamine such flashes of imagination and desire, if only to better understand the part they played in larger transnational patterns of change.[16]

The Cultural Field and the Space of Possibles

In using the term *cultural field* periodically throughout the book, I draw on the work of the French thinker Pierre Bourdieu and his legacy in the sociology of culture.[17] In Bourdieu's work, the cultural field serves as a spatial metaphor with which to conceptualize the way artists, writers, and intellectuals assume in their practice certain positions that can only be plotted and understood in relation to one another and in relation to a larger cultural system. Inherent in Bourdieu's theorization of the cultural field is the struggle between its actors to assume positions that will bring them certain rewards, such as success in the market or literary prestige. It is useful to us here because it offers a way of negotiating the thorny question of aesthetic and intellectual autonomy that hangs over every attempt to address the intellectual in exile. The idea of the cultural field belongs to a relational mode of thought by which reality is understood to be constituted primarily by the fluid relations *between* objects, rather than by externally given categories. In dealing with the midcentury United States, a period in which the dominant intellectual discourse was structured by division and containment at the level of both cultural hierarchies and national allegiance, the spatial figure of the cultural field helps us to understand the sense in which a whole system of relations is present in each of its constituent positions. This approach reveals the hierarchical categories imposed by American intellectuals of the period as an effective strategy in the battle for an advantageous position in the field rather than as a legitimate way of ordering culture, but it also demands that we understand the work of exilic figures in a radically contextualized manner that takes into account their relationships both to mass cultural forms and to rarefied elites, whether those relationships are ones of affinity or hostility.

The notion of the cultural field makes some room for the preservation of individual autonomy in the process of aesthetic and intellectual production, but only insofar as the actor makes use of the resources within reach and lays claim to positions that are readily available, which Bourdieu calls the "space of possibles."[18] This limited or relative autonomy is important for this

study as a way of understanding the constraints under which certain artists and intellectuals operated, and how those constraints affected their work. In chapter 2, for example, I trace the ways in which George Grosz disavowed his earlier Dada experimentalism once he had emigrated to the United States and chose instead to attempt to reinvent himself as a popular illustrator in the vein of Norman Rockwell. This move was based partly on the historical obsolescence of Dada as an available coordinate in the American cultural field of the 1930s and partly on the need for personal security as the Nazi party labeled his work "degenerate" and destroyed his reputation back in Germany. Nevertheless, Grosz's painful negotiation of the exigencies of the American cultural field deserves careful attention in order to appreciate the perverse consistency of his Dada principles in resisting the ongoing institutionalization of modernist art in the United States. Grosz's example demonstrates how a shift in practice can be conceived paradoxically as a way of preserving a consistent orientation in a changing field. One must move in order to remain in the same spot. In a comparable way, the decision Raymond Chandler made in 1934 to relinquish the dream he had nurtured in his youth of being a late romantic poet after Tennyson, and to become instead a writer of pulp detective stories, was determined by the options available to him as an alcoholic, unemployed oil executive living in Depression-era Los Angeles. As I argue in chapter 3, his decision was based largely on the form permitting him certain freedoms to experiment with style, as well as bringing him the immediate if limited financial rewards he required. On the other hand, the pulp genre was at that time unable to provide the intellectual legitimacy he had craved from poetry. My reading of Chandler's work focuses on how the practice of hardboiled fiction provided an unlikely improvised response to aesthetic and social habits inherited from his days as a private-school boy in Edwardian London. The turn to mass cultural forms in the American work of Grosz and Chandler in midcentury, then, emerge as innovative possible answers to the questions of how to be a New York Dadaist after the historical death of Dada and how to be a fin-de-siècle aesthete in 1930s Los Angeles.

For all its uses, though, Bourdieu's work is unsatisfactory for my purposes, due to its unacknowledged universalizing of principles derived from mid-nineteenth-century Paris. His notion of an autonomous restricted field for high art, in which economic principles are reversed and the "loser wins," can be attributed almost directly to Flaubert and does not translate easily into the Arnoldian cultural politics of the British late Victorian period that

influenced James and Chandler, or the eruptions of Dada across Europe during World War I, which played a crucial role in forming the dispositions of Grosz and Steinberg.[19] Neither does the concept of the restricted field offer a way of structuring analysis of the unstable US cultural system in the mid-twentieth century, though we will recognize several of its rhetorical gestures in the high criticism of the period.[20] Indeed, Bourdieu's own intellectual habits and preferences can often be noted echoing those of the preeminent American art critic of that period, Clement Greenberg. In particular, Bourdieu's description of the restricted field of high art as one in which the avant-garde gradually refines itself according to its medium, "through a return to sources and to the purity of its origins," making the field "more and more dependent on the specific history of the field, and more and more independent of external history," rehearses with some precision the contours of Greenberg's formalism.[21] Both critics sought ways to reconcile a fundamentally historicist disposition with an impulse to uncover an exclusively formal logic governing aesthetic decision making among elite artists. In this regard, they were not entirely successful in resolving the contradictions embedded in their own respective habitus—between Trotskyism and aesthetic formalism in Greenberg's case, social anthropology and *l'art pour l'art* in Bourdieu's.[22] My larger goal, however, is to point out the critical limitations of a cultural field conceived solely in terms of nation and to show how the introduction of transatlantic dynamics to our understanding of the mid-twentieth-century United States demands a rigorous new interrogation of the internal division of culture between high and low, restricted production and large scale.

In order to grapple with such a challenge, it will be necessary to turn to two more properly dialectical thinkers, C. L. R. James and Theodor Adorno. Both were American émigrés throughout the period in question, arriving in the same year, 1938. In chapter 1, I explore the relationship between their historical experiences of exile and their dialectical theories of culture. Superficially, James and Adorno stand as polar opposites in their attitudes to the idea of an American culture industry, one characterized by extreme pessimism and the other an outspoken promoter of the potential value of mass culture. However, one of the objectives of the chapter is to shed light on important affinities between them. The critical value they shared was a determination to address the division of culture itself as the most pressing social and philosophical problem facing them in the 1940s. Moreover, their ability to grasp it emerged from their transatlantic trajectories, which cre-

ated the foundations from which to launch Hegelian readings of Hollywood, as well as pointed critiques of modernism. Adorno and James sought ways to transform social and intellectual alienation into valuable critical resources but were ultimately driven from the United States altogether, under the increasingly hostile conditions of the early Cold War.

The remaining chapters of the book deal with writers and artists who negotiated in different ways the division of culture identified by James and Adorno. Chapter 2 traces the misunderstood career of George Grosz from his Dada treatment of American motifs during World War I, through his early attempts to establish himself as a popular illustrator in New York in 1933–34, to his nihilist photomontages of 1957. Chapter 3 carries out a comparable analysis of Raymond Chandler, charting the trajectory from his early English essays and poems through his hardboiled writing of the 1940s and 1950s, conceiving of his fiction as a displaced form of aestheticism in constant dialogue with the shifting grounds of cultural prestige and legitimacy in the period. In both chapters, I show that what emerges from a transatlantic critical perspective is a deep current of continuity coexisting with the visible ruptures in their creative practices. In chapter 4, I turn to two postwar road narratives written by Simone de Beauvoir and Vladimir Nabokov, respectively. In reading *America Day by Day* (1947) and *Lolita* (1955), I understand the road-trip genre to offer a means by which the European highbrow can orient her or himself in the newly commodified landscape of American culture and to plot coordinates in the cultural field. Both works portray the transatlantic intellectual as simultaneously critical of mass-consumer culture and irresistibly seduced by it, entangled in the very system that she or he attempts to objectify. Nevertheless, in taking account of the habitus of the two writers, it becomes possible to grasp the logic of their divergent receptions, including Beauvoir's exclusion from postwar intellectual life in the United States and Nabokov's contrasting prestige. Finally, chapter 5 examines the early American career of the Romanian émigré artist and illustrator Saul Steinberg, from his arrival during World War II to his work for the US pavilion in the Brussels World's Fair of 1958. Here I am interested in Steinberg's remarkable strategies for exploiting changes in the structure of the cultural field, by which he used his émigré status and institutional relationships as means to reach positions of compromise between the seemingly conflicting demands of security and legitimacy.

The diversity of this set of cultural practitioners is intended as one of the strengths of the book. Studies dealing with exilic culture in the United

States in this period tend to deal with more discrete groups organized according to nation, language, or, occasionally, medium. The history of the criticism is dominated by German and Austrian émigrés, the so-called Hitler refugees, who made up the Institute for Social Research in exile and also included literary celebrities such as Thomas Mann and Berthold Brecht.[23] This state of affairs is itself a reflection of the evolution of literary and cultural studies in the postwar period, where the Frankfurt School and critical theory have occupied dominant and prestigious positions. My inclusion of George Grosz, who referred to this group as the "croaking giants of the so-called avant-garde," serves as one way to unsettle an orthodox pattern, just as the comparative pairing of Theodor Adorno's negative dialectics with the perverse optimism of the Trinidadian intellectual C. L. R. James is intended to wrench him away from his familiar contexts among like-minded thinkers.[24] More broadly, the choice of individuals reflects my desire to uncover structures of correlation concealed by disciplinary policing. What might the work of the Russian novelist Nabokov and that of the Romanian artist Steinberg have in common, for example? (One answer—their wholesale rejection of the possibility of representational authenticity in the American postwar period.) The decision to focus primarily on the practices of writing, drawing, and painting, on the other hand, marks the inevitable limits of my own disciplinary competence. One might imagine a greater study making additional analyses of the music of Igor Stravinsky and the cinema of Fritz Lang, but the task of writing such a book is left for another.

Hardboiled Historicism, Aliens, and Exiles

Complicity, for my émigré figures as for the contemporary scholar of this period, is the starting point from which all understanding of midcentury US culture must depart. There are no dreams of artistic autonomy that are not threatened as soon as they are conceived. There are, ultimately, no clear consciences. If this sounds a little hardboiled, then I make no apology. The contemporary crime novelist Walter Mosley wrote recently that hardboiled existence begins at the moment when one realizes the destruction of one's ideals: "In a hardboiled world there's no black and white, no shade of gray, no innocence. In this world there are only choices between evils, and the secret, unobtainable rulebook was written by Satan himself."[25] Raymond Chandler responded to the passing of fin-de-siècle aestheticism—what he called "the age of grace"—by turning to the hardboiled genre, but my other figures are hardboiled, too, in the more oblique sense that the doubled ex-

periences of flight from historical catastrophe in Europe and the near-total commodification of the artwork in the United States left them in a hollowed, fallen world that demanded nevertheless to be inhabited.[26] Accommodations had to be made, modes of survival improvised. Aesthetic and intellectual style, at the level of voice and diction, color and line, did not simply register these exigencies but became the medium in which adjustments, resistances, and reorientations were actively worked through. For Mosley, hardboiled language "cuts to the bone because it is the idiom of survival," and it is precisely this sense of stakes that I have found missing in the sociological turn in literary studies.[27]

Lawrence Rainey, in his groundbreaking 1998 book *Institutions of Modernism*, was surely right to criticize the "fairy tales of good and evil" that had theretofore dominated accounts of modernism and consumerism.[28] However, I am also wary of the conceptual aridity that sometimes creeps into the sociology of literature and culture after Bourdieu, reflected in the interplay of his two dominant metaphorical tropes, those of abstract economics and games. It seems to me that an untempered dependence on such discourses threatens to become itself a rather empty investment in culture and, ultimately, a derogation of our responsibilities as students and scholars in the humanities. A more hardboiled history of the cultural field, then, would seek to be clear-eyed about the commodification of culture at midcentury and the inevitability of complicity emerging at various levels, while also accounting for the idiom of émigré survival, the concrete world of restricted but necessary choices made by individuals in their lives and work. In a hardboiled sense, then, this book is as much about the practice of cultural coping as it is about the sociology of high and low.

If hardboiled fiction provides one route into understanding the stakes of this book, then the other great mass genre of the mid-twentieth century—science fiction—provides another. The period I am addressing, after all, corresponds to the "golden age" of science fiction, in which the term *alien* took on the popular meaning of extraterrestrial being just as laws such as the 1940 Smith Act and the 1952 McCarran Walter Act gave the US state powers to designate, incarcerate, and deport foreign-born individuals as aliens.[29] The convergence between the two meanings of alien was exemplified by the extraordinary reception of Simone de Beauvoir's *America Day by Day* by the New York intellectuals. Beauvoir, as I discuss in chapter 4, had written an ambivalent account of her 1947 trip around the United States, which expressed personal exhilaration at her experience of the country's radical

difference to Europe but also grave reservations about its conformist tendencies. William Phillips accused *America Day by Day* of being a "literal-minded fantasy, with just enough semblance of reality to make America seem like a lost planet, recently discovered, a little like earth, but with its own strange ways."[30] Similarly, Mary McCarthy wrote of how Beauvoir had appeared as a modern-day Gulliver updated for the space age, having "descended from the plane as from a space ship, wearing metaphorical goggles."[31] The characterization of Beauvoir as alien clearly drew on popular science fiction tropes of the time. The allegorization of the perceived Communist threat as extraterrestrial invasion was being established as McCarthy wrote her review in 1952, following novels such as Robert A. Heinlein's *The Puppet Masters* (1951) and movies like *Invasion USA* (1952) and *Red Planet Mars* (1952).[32] Beauvoir's failure to publicly denounce Stalin and her criticism of the forms taken by capitalism in the United States meant that she swiftly became aligned with the nation's Cold War other, becoming not just foreign but radically alien. Beauvoir's visit to the United States was only ever temporary, but we will see how two other Marxist-influenced émigré intellectuals, Adorno and James, were legally designated aliens by the US state, leading to restrictions on their movement and ultimately to James's deportation. In this sense, to be an alien—more importantly, to *see* as an alien—was to pose a threat to the integrity and security of the state.

We should not lose sight, however, of the positivity of the alien goggles evoked by the attacks on Beauvoir. Her ability to "make America seem like a lost planet" was intended as a criticism by Phillips, and yet the ability to conceive a tired reality as if for the first time has been a modernist fantasy going back at least as far as Baudelaire's call for poets to see once again as children.[33] Phillips's phrase recalls the defamiliarization techniques that Russian Formalists earlier in the century identified as the very essence of the aesthetic.[34] Indeed, such formalist influences can be detected in the work of Vladimir Nabokov, who published soon after arrival in the United States his own science fiction tale in the *Atlantic Monthly*.[35] In "Time and Ebb" (1945), a ninety-year-old Jewish Holocaust survivor recalls from the vantage point of the distant future his arrival in the United States during World War II. The premise of the story is transparently an excuse for various exercises in defamiliarization. "Time and Ebb" is disarmingly admiring of 1940s America, in the sense that its narrator's estranged perspective is enabled by the historical distance he perceives between himself and his object, which is described with nostalgic fondness. The dazzling effects of

rendering the familiar iconography of drugstores and skyscrapers as doubly strange—for both the European boy freshly arrived in the United States and for the old man writing in the future—are typical of Nabokov's American work in ways we will see recur in his masterpiece *Lolita*. In a similar way, the ability to see the familiar commodified landscapes of the United States with fresh European eyes, and thus to subject the tawdry and banal to a near-magical revivification, was always the secret to Saul Steinberg's commercial success in the forties and fifties. So long as they were understood to function in a strictly aesthetic sense, estrangements of this type were generally welcome among the tastemakers of the US cultural field in midcentury, performing as they did a re-enchantment of American space at the very moment when it was being homogenized by the mass construction of shopping malls, highways, and suburbs.

The benefits of alien goggles, however, go well beyond such purely aesthetic effects. In this book, I am most interested in those moments when estranging patterns can be understood as closely related to the human experience of alienation and thereby gain some kind of critical traction. As I have suggested, crude notions of the alienated intellectual have become something of a critical cliché in studies of the intellectual migration, and I am keen to avoid the orthodox ivory tower. Edward Said's essays on exile provide an alternative starting point by conceiving of exilic defamiliarization in more productive dialectical terms, offering "a double perspective that never sees things in isolation," an opportunity to "look at situations as contingent, not inevitable, look at them as the result of a series of historical choices made by men and women, as facts of society made by human beings, and not as natural and god-given, therefore unchangeable, permanent, irreversible."[36] Said's investment in compensating the traumatic experience of exilic suffering with such gifts of critical insight results in a deeply ambivalent account of exile, which I find echoing through the lives and works of the figures treated in this book. They are often found paradoxically to internalize and even cultivate painful aspects of their alienation in order to nurture the advantages it confers. The state of being at home, of enjoying domestic comforts, becomes something to be both desired as a memory of distant pleasures and warded off as anodyne and disabling.

Don Siegel's 1956 movie, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, provides one example from science fiction of the polyvalent, reversible function of alienation I have in mind. This picture was largely ignored on release but has since been recognized as a groundbreaking work in science fiction film his-

tory due to the originality of its central conceit, that alien invasion, rather than being staged as a violent and melodramatic event, might instead be imagined as the gradual and insidious displacement of authentic feeling from everyday life. The "pod people" from another planet that take over a small Californian town almost unnoticed are identical to ordinary human beings in every respect, other than that they are incapable of genuine affect. "There's something missing," says one character in describing her uncle, who has already been replaced by a pod person. "Always when he talked to me there was a certain look in his eyes. Now it's gone. There's no emotion. The words are the same, but there's no feeling."[37] *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* has endured, in a way that its contemporaneous alien invasion movies have not, largely because of this innovative presentation of aliens as uncanny, both familiar and threatening. Versions of this trope were to reappear in science fiction and Cold War conspiracy thrillers throughout the late 1950s and into the sixties, most famously in two novels that became successful films—Richard Condon's *The Manchurian Candidate* (1959) and Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968). Susan Sontag noted in her perspicacious essay "The Imagination of Disaster" that this narrative subgenre, in which the human body is retained in appearance but emptied of capacities for memory and love, "derives most of its power from a supplementary and historical anxiety, also not experienced *consciously* by most people, about the depersonalizing conditions of modern urban life."[38] *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* articulated in a different register the same paradoxical inversion that I want to investigate in émigré art and writing, by which popularly circulated discourses and images of tranquil domesticity and comfortable homeliness in the midcentury United States are revealed through techniques of estrangement to be themselves dehumanizing charades. This function of alienation resonates with Said's characterization of exile as "constantly being unsettled and unsettling others." Once the process has begun (as the movie makes very clear), "you cannot go back to some earlier and perhaps more stable condition of being at home."[39]

There will be moments when my analysis in these pages comes under pressure from the attempt to undertake simultaneously close and distant reading, synchronic and diachronic analyses, or to understand artworks both on their own terms and in relation to alien cultural formations of various types. Such challenges arise inevitably from the dialectical ambition of the book as a whole, and only its readers will be able to judge whether or not it achieves its objectives in a satisfactory way. It is worth admitting,

however, that from its earliest conception this book was always intended to overcome a tension embedded in my own intellectual development between the history of American Studies as a discrete discipline and the academic study of modernism, both of which find their origins in the period I am discussing and have undergone regeneration as "new" since the late 1990s, when I began my undergraduate studies. It strikes me that the two disciplines, which rarely speak to each other in any of the institutions I have encountered on either side of the Atlantic, have the power not only to complement one other methodologically but also to mutually unsettle their foundational priorities in beneficial ways. This study of transatlantic aliens is by its nature predisposed to do that kind of work, and if there are moments of discomfort or discord in its attempts to read pulp fiction through Pater or Dada through Fenimore Cooper, then it has gone some way toward fulfilling its intended purpose.

1 Homeless Aliens and Dialectical Culture Critique

C. L. R. James and Theodor Adorno

The figures of C. L. R. James and Theodor W. Adorno play a doubled role in this book, representing both émigré intellectuals in their own right and methodological models for the study of twentieth-century culture. Denied the historical distance that we now enjoy, they were obliged to theorize the crises of the 1940s from within, as lived experience, and this immediacy makes precious resources of their writings. By reading them comparatively, as I do here, I hope not only to introduce a number of the concerns that later recur in the analyses of other figures but also to take an opportunity to reflect on critical method itself. James and Adorno share a set of historical and geographical coordinates, each having made the journey from London to New York in 1938, but there was a shared intellectual inheritance, too, traceable through Marx and Hegel, which differentiates their contributions to this topic from the less sophisticated interventions made by prominent American intellectuals in the same period. In crude terms, I want to ask what we have to learn from the moment when two Marxist Hegelians, deeply immersed in European traditions of high culture, arrive in mid-century America and start watching movies.

James emerged in Trinidad in the late 1920s as one of the island's most talented young intellectuals. In 1932, he moved to Britain, where he worked as a cricket writer for the *Manchester Guardian* and was exposed to revolutionary Marxism. His trip to the United States in 1938 was prompted by an invitation from the Socialist Workers Party to give a series of lectures and to meet with Leon Trotsky to discuss the response of the Fourth International to the so-called Negro question. He remained there, as a prolific writer and agitator on the radical left, until his deportation in 1953 as a suspected Communist. He left the United States having written, among many other things, a substantial work of philosophy and political theory, a

literary study of Herman Melville, and an unfinished history of American culture from the nineteenth century to the mid twentieth.[1] The German intellectual Adorno, on the other hand, had spent the mid-1930s working on a study of Edmund Husserl at Oxford University and came to New York after an invitation from Max Horkheimer to join the Institute for Social Research at Columbia University, where it had relocated in search of a safe haven from National Socialism. Adorno moved to Los Angeles in 1940 and eventually returned to Germany in 1949, having conducted research and writing across a range of genres and disciplines in his American years. His work in this period included, most famously, the volume he coauthored with Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), which subsequently became a keystone of the critical theory canon. He also produced studies of the mass media, sociological research on the potential for fascism among ordinary Americans, and his book *Minima Moralia: Reflections on Damaged Life* (1951), one of the great works of non-Anglophone American literature, which combined memoir, aphorism, philosophy, and cultural critique. There are reports that Adorno and James likely met, over coffee at the New School in New York, but there is little further evidence of their direct interaction.[2] It is evident enough, even from such briefly sketched biographical outlines, how divergent were their respective intellectual lives as they arrived in the United States in 1938, and this divergence has been reflected in their disciplinary afterlives, too.

James's contested legacies reside principally in postcolonial and cultural studies, where fierce debates have taken place over the prominence accorded to different facets of his oeuvre.[3] These have had the effect of producing a deceptively polarized vision of James's work in the academy, whereby he is understood either as a founding father of modern cultural studies, a revolutionary Trotskyite, or as a leading intellectual of the anti-imperialism and decolonization movements after World War II, as if these roles should be understood as mutually incompatible. More recently, James's legacy has again been claimed, this time as a harbinger of the transnational turn in American Studies.[4] Adorno, by contrast, has become a sadly reified figure; his image as an intransigent and heroic defender of a European modernist sensibility against the encroachments of mass culture was established in the 1970s, soon after his introduction to the US academy.[5] Despite a series of attempts by specialists to revise the notion of Adorno's mandarin elitism, Edward Said's judgment remains largely representative: "Adorno was completely European, a man made up of the highest of high

cultures" and "the quintessential intellectual, hating *all* systems, whether on our side or theirs, with equal distaste."[6] Accordingly, his reputation within cultural studies has deteriorated to that of a pessimistic elitist who never engaged with the cultural landscape in which he dwelt for a decade, even while he continues to exert a powerful influence on contemporary critical theory.[7]

A comparative reading of James and Adorno cannot be attempted, then, without doing a certain violence to the division of academic knowledge, but it is a violence endorsed by the intellectual eclecticism they practiced. Adorno's claim at the end of his career that he had "never rigorously separated the two disciplines" of sociology and philosophy serves as an explicit reminder of how he consistently rejected the increasing division of expertise in postwar American academia, what C. Wright Mills was to term by the early 1950s "the ascendency of the technician over the intellectual," the legacy of which persists to this day.[8] Adorno's engagements with music and literary criticism, empirical sociological research and Hegelian philosophy, and memoir and historiography were enabled by the relative autonomy he enjoyed under the aegis of the Institute for Social Research and its fundamentally interdisciplinary ethos. Correspondingly, James's American activities—which constantly sought to combine classical philosophy and Marxist theory, cultural and literary criticism, and revolutionary propaganda and political commentary—were unconstrained by formal institutional affiliations. It was under these specific conditions of relative intellectual autonomy and interdisciplinarity, enabled precisely through their marginality, that their respective analyses of American mass culture flourished. This tells us something valuable not only about the formidable demands made on those who attempt to do justice to their work in the present day but also about mass culture itself, which by its nature exceeds any attempt by thought to contain it within narrowly specialized disciplinary categories.

Our approach to this question must hold in tension the varieties of dialectical thought practiced by our two exiles, for while James and Adorno can both be called dialecticians they were also individually distinctive in their habits. James's deep immersion in the work of Lenin in the 1940s corresponded to an interest in the question of revolution, dating to his 1938 study of the Haitian Revolution, *The Black Jacobins.* The principal task he set himself was then to formulate ways for thinking about historical time in relation to social change, and he did so often by establishing the shared identity of opposite terms, such as *progress* and *backwardness.* Another

focus for his dialectical attention was the process whereby the revolutionary future is determined by the interplay of the actual and the possible, a process in which he saw Hollywood films as performing an important role. To these tendencies we can contrast Adorno's "negative dialectics" (the title of one of his later books), which abjures Lenin and the possibility of revolution by driving thought itself rather than social organization into a state of flux. Fredric Jameson describes how Adorno's dialectics consist of "a movement of negation that can never reach a synthesis, a negativity that ceaselessly undermines all the available positivities until it has only its own destructive energy to promote."[9] While James's objective in his American years was that of revolutionary social change, Adorno's was simply to keep the possibility of thought alive in an era of totalizing mass culture. Provisionally, then, I propose to hold them under the signs of the positive and negative, respectively, if only so that they can be later dislodged.

The terms *alien* and *alienation* play an important role in my analysis, and I take seriously the different claims made by both figures that their exilic status was inextricable from their critical methodologies. In 1968, Adorno argued that his jazz criticism had attained its particular grasp on the subject because, "as one says rather too glibly in Germany nowadays, it approached from an 'alienated' point of view" and therefore preserved a "freshness of judgment."[10] Evidently, in the late sixties, Adorno was already concerned that the term *alienation* had fallen into reification following its deployment by the New Left as the centerpiece of their capitalist critique. The term carried for Adorno and James a specific valence, which must be kept in mind if we are to effectively historicize their theories of mass culture. The year of their arrival, 1938, marked the beginning of a new era in the long history of American countersubversion and political demonization, a "shift in emphasis," as Michael Rogin called it, "from the deranged subversive body to the calculating alien mind."[11] That year saw the House of Representatives create a new committee for the investigation of "un-American activities." Then the 1940 Smith Act, which made it a criminal offence to advocate or conspire to advocate the overthrow of the US government by force or violence, was attached to the Alien Registration Act, thus confirming the association of aliens and sedition. In March 1942, Adorno was designated an "Alien of Enemy Nationality" under the Enemy Aliens Act. This legal status left him under constant threat of evacuation and limited his movements to daytime trips within five miles of his house, an imposition which, in Los Angeles, he declared to his parents, "amounts to being completely locked

up."[12] For many exiles, this situation echoed uncomfortably with the enforced registration of Jews in Germany in the 1930s. Hannah Arendt wrote in January 1943 that "in daylight, of course, we become only 'technically' enemy aliens—all refugees know this. But when technical reasons prevented you from leaving your home during the dark hours, it certainly was not easy to avoid some dark speculations about the relation between technicality and reality."[13] Indeed, Adorno's alienation by and from the state explicitly prefigured some of his most characteristic theoretical preoccupations in his American years, including the ambiguous relationship between the bureaucratic apparatus and those who administer it. He noted in a letter from the time that "even the special measures as such do not at all have the character of harassment, that all individuals have the best intentions, and . . . [that] the unpleasant aspects merely stem from the ponderousness of the whole machinery."[14] Adorno, along with other members of the Frankfurt School, had been kept under surveillance by the FBI. Even if his file was never explicitly acted upon, it seems likely that the climate of rising hostility toward leftist aliens, particularly those engaged in some form of cultural labor, contributed strongly to Adorno's decision to leave the country permanently.[15]

In the case of James, the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act (McCarran-Walter Act) provided the state with the occasion to discipline him. Passed despite President Truman's opposition in 1952, the act enabled the deportation of immigrants or naturalized citizens suspected of engaging in subversive activities, as well as the barring of suspected subversives from entering the country. Charlie Chaplin, perhaps the only cultural figure that James and Adorno admired equally, was one prominent figure to be denied reentry.[16] Despite his frequently voiced objections to the Communist Party USA, James, like Chaplin, was categorized as a Communist and, as such, a "subversive alien."[17] On June 10, he was removed to Ellis Island and there began *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways*, a study of Melville that deliberately folds the subjective experience of alienation into its argument about America and totalitarianism. James was deported to the United Kingdom early in 1953, and he was perhaps thinking of Adorno when he later made his own claim to a privileged outsider's perspective on the United States. "I never made the mistake that so many otherwise intelligent Europeans made of trying to fit that country into European standards. Perhaps for one reason—because of my colonial background—I always saw it for what it was, and not for what I thought it ought to be."[18] In this statement, the

complex triangulation of James's historical allegiances as a product of the Black Atlantic is foregrounded, and an alternative to Adorno's openly Eurocentric perspective opened up: one in which mass culture, seen as an organic expression of the nation, might be judged first on its own terms rather than those imposed on it from without. In this sense, James's colonial, migratory history could be said to have bestowed on him a certain dialectical perspective unavailable to the less cosmopolitan Adorno. If the latter claimed that being an exile in the United States allowed him to "see culture from the outside," then James's perspective saw the tensions and contradictions of American culture emerge from its internal structure.[19] As he wrote in his 1948 study, *Notes on Dialectics*, "the object does not move into something *else*; it shows the Other contained within it."[20]

James and Positive Alienation

James's interest in the Hollywood film industry predated his arrival in the United States by at least seven years. In 1931, just before leaving Trinidad for Britain, he published a short story entitled "The Star That Would Not Shine" in the *Beacon*, an anticolonial literary journal. At the heart of the story is an obese Trinidadian boy named Jonny, who is approached by a Hollywood agent to play the part of a young Fatty Arbuckle. His parents readily agree, desirous to convert their boy's weight into "three hundred warm dollars a week," only to discover that Jonny weeps uncontrollably whenever his role is mentioned.[21] Despite his parent's cajoling, Jonny shows an instinctive resistance to his exploitation and refuses his demeaning role, initiating a virtual strike against the commodification of his body by the nascent culture industry. The outlines of a critique of Hollywood as exploitative and imperialist are clear enough from this central narrative, but what makes the story particularly interesting is the way it is framed by its narrator, who is also called James. The narrator hears Jonny's story from the father, Gonzales, after meeting him in a cinema in Port of Spain, where they watch a romantic film starring Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford. James's narrator is a version of his young self, a movie lover but also an intellectual snob who is irritated by his distracting neighbor, noting that "from what I remember from his appearance before the lights went out, he seemed far from being a friend of any kind . . . Spanish type . . . dressed tidily but shabbily."[22]

The movie industry in "The Star That Would Not Shine" creates a network of alienated human relationships, distanced in both time and space. The refusal of the boy to sell his body to Hollywood estranges him from his

father, who now lives in Port of Spain while Jonny works in New York as an engineer. Their adult relationship takes the form of the money and commodities that Jonny sends Gonzales across the Bay of Mexico. The narrator and Gonzales, meanwhile, are made to confront their differences of race and class in the shared dark space of a colonial movie theatre. The real pathos of the story arises from the ironic way in which Gonzales returns lonely to the movies in order to search out another human relationship to compensate for the very one destroyed by the film industry and yet finds there only the prejudice of a middle-class intellectual who takes his story and offers disdain in return. The only thing "James" and Gonzalez have in common is their mutual inability to disentangle themselves from the movie industry and thus to step outside of the cycle of seduction and exploitation it generates.

James's decision to frame his story self-consciously with a deliberately callous eponymous narrator suggests that he was trying to use fiction as a way of articulating an unease over his own vexed relationship with the movies and the masses, and of attempting to map out his own conflicted position within that network of alienation. Later, as we will see, he turned to other forms and methods in order to theorize, historicize, and indeed strive for a resolution to these problems. It remains important, however, that his early efforts were in fiction, a form well suited to holding these kinds of contradiction in solution. James, we should remember, was then some distance from the revolutionary propagandist he was to become in the 1940s. It was the satirical novelist William Makepeace Thackeray who dominated his nineteenth-century canon up to the early 1930s, and James admitted to not having read "one line of Marx" before his arrival in Britain.[23] As a scholar at Queen's Royal College in Port of Spain from 1911 to 1918, he had received a colonial education in what Stuart Hall later described as "a mimickry [*sic*] of an English public school," from which he took much more than a love of cricket.[24] Rather, as James himself emphasized, Queen's Royal College endowed him with a detailed and thoroughgoing knowledge of the English, French, and classical literary canons, leaving him "as well educated as anyone in England would be, so far as books were concerned," with a familiarity not only with Shakespeare, the Romantics, and Matthew Arnold but also Lamartine and Victor Hugo, Théophile Gautier and Balzac, and "the general ideas of an English or European intellectual."[25] When James wrote of his Bloomsbury life in 1932, then, he was able to reassure his Trinidadian readers that "both by instinct and by training I belong to it and fit into it as

naturally as a pencil fits into a sharpener. Birds of a feather will flock together."[26] His response to British working-class taste was one of disgust and disappointment. "It does seem to me that millions of these people are mentally adolescent. They live on cheap films and cheap newspapers" (122). Ironically, given his later defenses of American mass culture, only the United States, "that dreadful country," was thought more culturally depraved: "Western Europe can say at least that she is better off than America—if that is any comfort" (117).

The importance of a particular aspect of James's English affiliations, his persistent engagement with the nineteenth-century tradition of cultural criticism, has been greatly underestimated in the scholarship. Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, one might surmise, is irrelevant to James's interest in the history of black liberation, his propaganda for the Socialist Workers Party, or his various interventions into the study of American mass culture. Such assumptions would be misguided, since there is evidence that the Preface, along with works such as Shelley's "Defence of Poetry" and Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*, remained crucial reference points for James long after he left school. As he later described in *Beyond a Boundary*, James's intellectual consciousness "came to maturity within a system that was the result of centuries of development in another land, was transported as a hothouse flower is transplanted and bore some strange fruit."[27] A view on James's *American Civilization* adjusted to take this "strange fruit" into account would read his unfinished study alongside Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society*, published eight years later in 1958, which dwells at some length on the continued relevance of English romanticism for a Marxist account of culture in the twentieth century. While Williams circumscribed his analysis within the familiar borders of the English tradition, however, James's American work was to generate unexpectedly powerful traction through his idiosyncratic confluence of Hegelian idealism, Marxist-Leninist theories of proletarian revolution, romantic faith in the redemptive power of a universal culture, and an immersive knowledge of comic strips, schlocky movies, and detective fiction.

One of the best places to observe this confluence is in James's extraordinary correspondence with his second wife, Constance Webb, whom he met and married in 1946. That year he wrote to her of having watched *Love Letters*, a sentimental romance starring Jennifer Jones and directed by William Dieterle (with whom Adorno and his wife Gretel had meanwhile become close friends in Los Angeles). James's palpable excitement at this movie was

bound up with Jones's performance, which conveyed, he claimed, "a genuine poetic quality. Over and over again it happened. Then it struck me. *This is our modern poetry.*"[28] In what follows, James constructs a framework within which to understand the achievements of popular American cinema, building explicitly on the foundations laid by Wordsworth, "whom *we must read*," in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads.* Wordsworth's defense of his decision to return poetry to a metrically arranged vernacular, to the "language really used by men," finds its twentieth-century form not in Eliot's demotic borrowings in *The Waste Land* but in the rhythm and inflection of Jones's dialogue.[29] From this comparative position, James proceeds to unfurl his theory of the social character of vernacular speech rhythm and its distillation through various historical stages into poetic language: "The logical working out of it hits me with great force because I was working on the incomparable Hegel and applying his ideas to English poetry."[30] Here, then, is early evidence of how James sought to transmute the character of the Hegelian World Spirit into an aesthetic current binding the literary canon to social development and approximating to ever closer degrees the language of the working class. Of particular interest is the way in which James criticizes the attempts of Eliot and Pound to use the vernacular as "lacking a positive *universal*," and designates high modernism an abortive dead end in contrast to the living art of Hollywood. In contemporary writing, only the final pages of Richard Wright's *Black Boy* strike James as achieving a comparable effect. A Jamesian reading of *Black Boy*'s closing paragraph, with its repeated infinitives—"to tell, to march, to fight, to create a sense of the hunger for life"—would see Wright as appropriating the final stanza of Tennyson's "Ulysses" for a "positive universal," an expanded expression of desire for "the freedoms, powers, sentiments, etc., of previous generations enjoyed only by a few."[31] Jennifer Jones, then, for a brief utopian moment in 1946, could be placed alongside the nation's most controversial author, a black ex-Communist, as both a source of revolutionary expression and inheritor of the English poetic tradition.

In 1946, it was still possible to think in such terms. That year there were 4,985 strikes and approximately 4.6 million strikers across the United States; it was the most tumultuous year for industrial activism in the nation's history to date. Retrospectively, it is now clear that this was the high point of the American Trotskyist movement, the closest it ever came to achieving its aims before its demise following the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947 and the onset of the second Red Scare.[32] The strikes registered with Adorno, who wrote

that year, albeit in pessimistic tones, of how "wealth insulates from overt injustice. While the policeman beats up strikers with a rubber truncheon, the factory-owner's son can drink an occasional whiskey with a progressive writer."[33] James, in his role as a member of the Johnson-Forest Tendency, spoke in March to the Socialist Workers Party of preparing for imminent revolution, even if he was rebuked for his optimism by one of their young members, a young Irving Howe.[34] I want to emphasize the historical link between James's changing views on American mass culture and the development of labor unrest in the immediate postwar years in order to make the point that his cultural criticism cannot be understood apart from—indeed, was always of a piece with—his radical activism. This is an insight which, though simple enough to comprehend, has been repeatedly overlooked in the wake of the various disciplinary specializations of his legacy. During the period 1943 to 1948, as labor unrest in the United States escalated to unprecedented levels and radical left blocs emerged from fascist resistance groups across Europe, James was constantly working at ways to integrate his eclectic interests. What we observe in his correspondence is the erosion of the classic bourgeois distinction of the American midcentury between work and leisure, between, on one hand, the daily writing of articles for the socialist press on labor organization and the reading of Hegel's *Science of Logic* and, on the other, the many lonely hours spent at movie theaters. "The reason?" he wrote to Constance Webb, "I work at home. At times I must stop. The only thing that keeps me quiet is the movies."[35] What began as an escape from intellectual labor became part of it, as the division of James's days broke down and the parts began to cross-fertilize.

This process of cross-fertilization carried its own utopian charge at a time when the division between work and leisure was becoming ever more clearly defined by the entertainment industry, and it offered a glimpse of what an authentically American cultural revolution might look like. The letters provide a crucial document of this process as it evolved, articulating the gradual development of ideas that would only emerge formally in the early 1950s, in *American Civilization* and *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways*. In 1943, for example, we discover that James went to see Bette Davis in *Now Voyager* no less than *six* times, prompting his first documented attempt to think dialectically about Hollywood, the revelation that "the movies are not merely a reflection, but an extension of the actual—an extension along the lines which people feel are lacking and possible in the actual. That, my dear, is the complete secret of Hegelian dialectic."[36] Hegel provided James with

the opportunity to theorize a possibility that remained unspoken in "The Star That Would Not Shine," the possibility that alienation by and from the culture industry might be transcended and develop its own positivity. In the Preface, Wordsworth had railed against "the degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation" that he observed among an urban working class fed by sensational drama and novels, and which "blunt[s] the discriminating power of the mind" and "reduce[s] it to a state of almost savage torpor."[37] In the mid-1940s, as James sat down over and over again to watch Bette Davis and Jennifer Jones, these arguments were being echoed in the highbrow press by Dwight Macdonald, among others. In his 1944 article "A Theory of Popular Culture," Macdonald wrote that the "deadening and warping effect of long exposure to movies, pulp magazines and radio can hardly be overestimated," even as he clung tenuously to elements of his dwindling Trotskyist affiliations.[38] James knew Macdonald from those days of the late 1930s when they had both moved in the circles of the radical left, and in 1945 he still wrote of wishing to see "people like us, Dick [Richard Wright] and James Farrell and another boy I know, Bernie Wolf, and even the rude Dwight [Macdonald]."[39] But James's achievement at this time was to resist the temptation to follow his romantic hero and the intellectual establishment, as he would have done ten years previously, and instead to historicize the Wordsworthian position as a moment to be superseded in the evolving narrative of culture. In this way, he was able to conceptualize a reengagement between working-class taste and historical process, by which fundamental desires for unalienated association and autonomy might be precipitated and then transformed into revolutionary praxis. Whereas in "The Star That Would Not Shine," James's model for the culture industry was that of a vicious circle from which the intellectual struggles to disengage himself, by the time he came to write *American Civilization* in the wake of his discovery of Hegel, the solution was found to emerge from the problem itself. As he wrote in 1948, "the object does not move into something *else*; it shows the Other contained within it."[40] James had become a dialectician of mass culture.

The importance of this moment for James's intellectual legacy in American Studies can hardly be overstated, determining as it does his two systematic attempts at synthesizing the United States' cultural production with its political and social development since the mid-nineteenth century: *American Civilization* and *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways.* It remains to be determined, though, in which guises James's dialectical habits proceeded (and

faltered). As a starting point, it might be offered that one of the most difficult challenges he faced was one inherited from Lenin, the problem of moving methodologically between the dialectic as a way of narrating historical change and a more properly systematic dialectic in which thought proceeds through the identification of contradictions and the insufficiencies of conceptual categories.[41] This problem becomes particularly apparent in the composition of *American Civilization* and may indeed be one of the reasons that James never again fully took up the study after abandoning it in 1950. His principal argument concerning the culture industry is clear enough: that the American "popular arts" of film, comics, and radio drama represent the true inheritors of democratic aesthetic impulses set in motion by the American Renaissance writers a century earlier, and that they offer an expression of the desires of the American people otherwise unavailable in the stale intellectual culture of the 1940s, with its fetishizing of European modernism.[42] James began his chapter on mass culture with the assertion that it represented the "climax" of the entire study, and yet it also serves to introduce a certain contradiction into his own thesis, in that it articulates a historical decline in the vitality of popular arts since 1929, even while maintaining their absolute significance as signposts to the revolutionary future. His account of the historical shift from the innovations of Chaplin and Griffith to the banalities of the talkies contains its own negative logic. Chaplin, he says, "produced something that was new," and "by new I mean what Greta Garbo is not," but in order to ascertain what this might mean for his larger narrative of American civilization, we need to address a greater dialectical tension in James's midcentury work, which is articulated through the opposition of progress and barbarism in the state.[43]

Glimpses of this opposition can be discerned first in James's histories of the late 1930s, written just before his transatlantic crossing. In *The Black Jacobins*, for example, San Domingo's economic successes are precisely what bring about its revolution. "With every stride in production the colony was marching to its doom."[44] The vision of an apparently flourishing economy concealing irreparable structural rifts that would lead to revolution must have appealed to James's imagination during the United States' recovery from the Great Depression in the 1940s, but at some point during his American expatriation, James transcribed this pattern onto a way of thinking about cultural expression. *Notes on Dialectics* shows how James took Lenin's classic diagnosis of the simultaneous advancement and backwardness of czarist Russia and began to apply those ideas, as "the law of historical com-

pensation," to the literary canon. He notes, for example, the achievements of Gogol and Dostoevsky alongside the nation's feudal economy and remarks on how "economically and politically backward Germany produced the classic philosophy *and* marxism."[45] In *American Civilization*, we find an inversion of the terms but not the form of this dialectic. "The great masses of Americans are backward in 'culture' in the European sense; but in the essential needs of modern civilized man as we have described him, they are the most advanced people on the face of the globe."[46] This is perhaps the most important statement James made with regard to his future influence on cultural and American Studies. It amounts to nothing less than a radical redefinition of culture itself—a repudiation of the entire European concept, along with its terminology, in favor of an unburdened American "civilization," conceived in the projected light of the future. In later writings, this compensatory logic was driven even further, to the point at which "the absence of traditional culture" was asserted as the United States' "greatest strength," and "what Western Civilization reveres as culture" could be designated "poison."[47]

Seen in this light, James's judgment on American mass entertainment in the late 1940s takes on a dual significance not fully acknowledged in *American Civilization.* While the principal trends he identifies in the culture industry, of violent noir narratives and fetishized celebrities, represent a kind of aesthetic fall from the great silent era of Chaplin and Griffith in Hollywood, they are nevertheless repositories of repressed social desires for autonomy or, to use James's own terminology, "extensions of the possible," symptomatic of an "advanced" civilization. A comparable thesis with regard to the movies had been advanced by Robert Warshow in his essay "The Gangster as Tragic Hero" in the February 1948 *Partisan Review*, where he had suggested that the figure of the gangster encouraged a kind of vicarious enjoyment of freedoms otherwise unavailable to the moviegoer. However, if Warshow argued that the tensions set up by the gangster film were ultimately resolved in the movie theater by the inevitable death of the tragic hero—"it is *his* death, not ours"—James expected, at any moment, the American working class to transform their violent desires into revolutionary praxis.[48]

James staked his thesis on American mass culture on the possible realization of this transformation, and yet it seems likely that his ideas were in large part inspired by a work of fiction. Writing as J. R. Johnson, he reviewed Richard Wright's *Native Son* for the *New International* in May 1940, claiming Wright as a "splendid talent," albeit one compromised by association with

Stalinism.[49] James's review is organized around the identification of Bigger Thomas with the revolutionary potential of the black working class and, in particular, with the commitment to violence necessary for it to achieve its political aims. What remains unspoken in the review but becomes visible in his work during the following decade is the way James took hold of the role of American mass culture, especially the movies, in *Native Son*. *The Gay Woman*, which Bigger watches on the day he murders Mary Dalton, provokes in Bigger thoughts of sharing in the wealth of the white middle class. "Those were smart people: they knew how to get hold of money, millions of it. Maybe if he were working for them something would happen and he would get some of it."[50] The movie precipitates a chain reaction of barely articulated desires that are transformed into action at the moment he suffocates Mary and lead ultimately to his gun battle with the police. James's admiring review is obliged to remain silent on the murder of the defenseless woman, but nevertheless he would have been keenly interested in the way that film plants in Bigger a seed of class and race consciousness that ultimately develops into revolutionary violence. Bigger's evolution into an autonomous human, aware for the first time that he has "destiny in his grasp," is linked explicitly to his experience of mass culture. "He was more alive than he could ever remember having been; his mind and attention were pointed, focused toward a goal . . . toward that sense of fullness he had so often but inadequately felt in magazines and movies."[51] It is in this sense, I would argue, that James makes his claim in *American Civilization* that the gangster movies of the 1940s represent a "profound, communal, social force." "In the end 'crime does not pay,' but for an hour and a half highly skilled actors and a huge organization of production and distribution have given to many millions a sense of active living."[52] The constraints under which James operated in 1950 meant that he felt unable in his manuscript to express the necessity for this realization to take violent form, as he had done in the 1940 review of *Native Son.* Nevertheless, in the context of his discussion of Lenin's notebooks in *Notes on Dialectics*, his thinking was clear. The American working classes, like the Russian in 1917, "are going to LEAP from the objective conditions of 1948."[53]

The difficulties that James faced in creating a dialectical narrative of American cultural evolution become most visible in his use of the term "perversion" to describe both the prevailing trends in the American culture industry and the existence of totalitarian states in Germany and the Soviet Union. At the midpoint of his chapter on the popular arts, in discussing vio-

lent noir narratives and celebrity culture, he asks, "To what extent are the violent murderous rejection and the adoration of individuals characteristic of the mass in general?" He answers that "they are inherent in society but only in a society in which the actual deepest desires of the mass cannot find expression. They are essentially a perversion."[54] Similarly, at the end of the chapter, we are told that "the totalitarian states represent a perversion, a cruel, barbarous but *necessary* perversion of the instincts and desires for high civilization characteristic of modern man."[55] These moments suggest to us how *American Civilization* begins to resemble a travesty of the progress of the Hegelian *Geist* as culture, in which the true path is abandoned during the economic and political crises of the 1930s and 1940s, leaving the United States, despite its apparent advantages over Europe, obscurely unable either to move forward or to finally identify with itself. American mass culture, James finds, is both psychological preparation for fascism *and* the focus of hope for a revolutionary leap, a wrong turn that may paradoxically lead us to our goal after all.

Another example of perversion used in this way as an articulation of simultaneous risk and potential is found in James's account of Melville's *Pierre* three years later in *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways*. In one of the most striking passages in the commentary, he identifies Pierre's incestuous embrace of his half-sister as a turning point not only in the novel but in the narrative of culture itself. "At that moment in the story Western civilization took a long stride in the consciousness of its own degradation."[56] James's reading of *Pierre* finds its eponymous hero to be a representative of intellectuals—at the time of its composition and in the mid-twentieth century—who, paralyzed by the enormity of the social contradictions they face, regress to infantile desire rather than take on the work of transforming the world. He takes particular interest in Pierre's discovery of a copy of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, open at the famous lines, "The time is out of joint: O cursed spite/That ever I was born to set it right!" James notes, "that is his situation exactly" (102). Pierre's failure is to answer a historical perversion with a sexual one, and Melville's achievement as an intellectual was to objectify it as a social phenomenon and thus bring his readers to consciousness of more legitimate ends for their desires. James's critique of the contemporary intellectual, however, finds its strongest expression in his allegorical reading of *Moby Dick*. Here, Ishmael is read dialectically as concealing an identity with his opposite, an "intellectual Ahab . . . enclosed in the solitude of his social and intellectual speculation" (41). Ishmael and Ahab are two related social

faces of totalitarianism, the raging tyrant and the perverted intellectual, folded into one another in order to make room for the heroic portrayal of work and workers. James describes Ishmael as a "man not at home in the world," whose intellectual work reproduces the world in his image, so that "he sees his fellow men as ridden with his own sense of homelessness and despair" (40).

The power of James's reading comes from the way he opens up a utopian element in *Moby Dick*, whereby the homelessness that Ishmael nurtures yields up its opposite in the mariners, those who can find a home in cooperative work rather than in nations. *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways* serves then to remind us how important it is to bear in mind the collaborative nature of James's intellectual labor in the United States, particularly in his work with Raya Dunayevskaya and Grace Lee Boggs in translating Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* under the auspices of the Johnson-Forest Tendency. (*American Civilization*, too, identifies itself as a collaborative project in its surviving form, a working manuscript sent out to colleagues for comment and annotation.) There is some justification in Paul Buhle's suggestion that James's Ishmael, like the narrator of "The Star That Would Not Shine," is a fraught self-portrait onto which he projected his worst fears about irreconcilable cultural stratification.[57] Nevertheless, by the time James was deported from the United States, he had learned, like the crew of the Pequod, a way of being at home in labor even while out at sea. In this lesson, he reveals perversion to be nothing less than an unfulfilled dialectic, the reminder that the promise of trajectories articulated in theory can only be completed by social praxis, and the state of being "at home" to be nothing more than the resolve to fulfill that promise.

Shipwrecked: Adorno, James, and the Division of Culture

On the occasions when James and Adorno have been read together by scholars and critics, the result has all too often exemplified the kind of reified thinking against which they battled for much of their careers. In one recent study of intellectuals and mass culture, for example, we find the following alignment of James with Walter Benjamin: "Unlike Adorno, they did not see the avant-garde as art independent of society or as a savior of an overconsumed society. For Adorno, art was separate from life; for Benjamin and James, inseparable."[58] Such statements draw on and prolong the misunderstanding of Adorno as a hermetic mandarin elitist, providing a symbol for one half of a binary which divides thinkers into camps of "for or against"

mass culture. In 1949, Adorno had addressed this misunderstanding in advance, arguing that the culture critic "is necessarily of the same essence as that to which he fancies himself superior," and thankfully a number of revisionist studies of Adorno have now emphasized the extent and depth of his engagement with US cinema, radio, and print media.[59] In fact, both figures were interested more in criticizing the process by which culture was being stratified in the American 1940s than in the policing of the divisions themselves. James wrote to Daniel Bell of the "division between the culture of the intellectuals and educated people and the desire of the mass to interest itself and amuse itself and be stimulated," going on to add that "it is this division which in my opinion the twentieth century has to break down."[60] The correlative to this baldly stated position is to be found in Adorno's essay "Jazz—Perennial Fashion," in which he claims that "the organization of culture into 'levels' such as the first, second and third programs, patterned after low, middle and highbrow, is reprehensible." What makes Adorno's analysis distinct is the sentence that follows: "But it cannot be overcome simply by the lowbrow sects declaring themselves to be highbrow . . . Anyone who allows the growing respectability of mass culture to seduce him into equating a popular song with modern art because of a few false notes squeaked by a clarinet; anyone who mistakes a triad studded with 'dirty notes' for atonality, has already capitulated to barbarism."[61] One of the most important differences between James and Adorno thus emerges from their respective critiques of the stratification of taste. Whereas for James the critical goal was to abolish such divisions altogether in order to achieve a unified culture, Adorno's position was more ambivalent. He wished to interrogate the construction of the categories whilst preserving the potential for aesthetic discrimination of their contents. To do otherwise, he would argue, was to put the critic at the service of the culture industry, for whom a unified culture was quite precisely the objective.

Like James, Adorno was drawn to narratives of mariners and castaways during his exile. Rather than Melville's *Moby Dick*, however, it was to Homer's *Odyssey* that he turned with his collaborator Max Horkheimer in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). This study stands roughly parallel to James's *American Civilization* six years later, in that both seek, however paradoxically, to assimilate the moment of American mass culture into a greater narrative of culture itself, whether that be a distinctively national narrative, as in James's case, or one of the Western tradition more broadly, as in Adorno's. If *American Civilization* took the form of a Hegelian travesty, then *Dia-*

lectic of Enlightenment exemplifies one of Adorno's most characteristic arguments, that Hegel was not Hegelian enough.[62] Correspondingly, the study deploys the dialectic as a means of violating its own narrative coherence, adopting a formal strategy whereby the digressions afforded by the two "excursus" chapters come to assume the burden of the thesis itself, only for it to disintegrate into fragments in the final pages. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is in this formal sense a modernist experiment in its own right, in which thought (rather than, as in Joyce's *Ulysses*, character or style) wanders in search of home, only to discover that the "promise of a happy homecoming is the deception by which the past entraps a humanity filled with longing."[63] The transformation of homecoming from promise into threat was the great theme of Adorno's exile.

Although *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is most commonly cited in reference to Adorno's chapter on the culture industry, its most powerful moment arguably lies elsewhere, in the meditation on Odysseus's encounter with the Sirens, which takes place in the first chapter. The Sirens episode is allegorized by the authors as a means of understanding the birth of art along with the division of labor at the beginning of history. James had in his reading of *Moby Dick* attempted a comparable maneuver, whereby Ishmael's failures to participate fully in the physical work of the voyage divided him from the crew and aligned him instead with the destructive intellectual impulses of Ahab. In Adorno and Horkheimer's reading of the Sirens, the emphasis falls not so much on the question of the reader's own choice of alignment. Rather, their interest is in the divide between Odysseus and his crew, which is expressed through their respective relationships to the Sirens' irresistible song. The crew as workers are denied access to the aesthetic altogether, their "urge toward distraction must be grimly sublimated in redoubled exertions" (26), as they plug their ears and obey the order to row. Odysseus permits himself the freedom to experience the song of the Sirens but only under the paradoxical condition of bondage by his own crew. The lure of the Sirens' song is thus "neutralized as a mere object of contemplation, as art," and the authors transform Odysseus into his modern bourgeois counterpart, a concertgoer "as immobilized as audiences later," whose "enthusiastic call for liberation goes unheard as applause. In this way the enjoyment of art and manual work diverge as the primeval world is left behind" (27). The reason why this is such an important moment for Horkheimer and Adorno is that it provides them with a means of rewriting Hegel's master-slave dialectic through the introduction of the aesthetic. In this version,

unlike in Melville's, both parties survive without being wrecked, but only as alienated beings. Odysseus cannot give himself completely either to work or to the song. The crew, meanwhile, are "subjugated in body and soul," their senses disabled (27). The parallels with the twentieth century are clear: if Odysseus prefigures the modern bourgeois music lover, then the rowers themselves are contemporary American workers, with their "inability to hear with their own ears what has not already been heard," attuned to the repetitive temporal rhythms of labor rather than song (28). The division opened up between alienated aesthetic perception and alienated labor, conceived as a relationship of oppression and mastery, remained for Horkheimer and Adorno necessarily far from resolution, constituting as it did the very definition of culture.

In 1943, as Horkheimer and Adorno were completing *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, James wrote to Constance Webb of his hope that a movie he had just seen, *A Song to Remember*, signaled the closing of this division between the American working classes and authentic culture. The film, a biopic about Chopin, indicated to him that "music, great music, will become a possession of the people. *It is revolutionary.* Why? Because the more the technical discoveries of capitalism bring culture to the masses, the more they resent the degradation and humiliation of their role in *production*—the grinding slavery of the machine."[64] Translated into the terms of the Sirens episode in Homer's *Odyssey*, James imagines a moment at which the crew's wax stoppers fail, causing them to hear the beautiful song and consequently to throw down their oars. James's position here is closely related to Trotsky's, following his suggestion in *Literature and Revolution* that the proletariat require training in the Western canons, from Shakespeare to Pushkin and Goethe, to "pass through the entire history of artistic culture" in order to gain a full understanding of their own revolutionary potential.[65] Later, in *American Civilization*, he wrote in a similar Trotskyist vein of the positive effects of mass circulation novels, of how "hundreds of thousands are now reading Flaubert, Dostoyevsky and Dreiser, taking them to the factory in the paper-backed editions."[66] For James, this phenomenon illustrated a dialectical process by which the capitalists' pursuit of profit brought about unintentionally a loosening of their grip on the proletariat. Such a view is dependent on a faith in the humanizing influence of the Western cultural tradition, and it is perhaps this disposition that Michael Denning has in mind when he refers suggestively to James as an "Arnoldian Trotskyist."[67] As we have already seen, however, James also began to radically question such values

when he left the United States in 1953, the year in which he referred to "what Western Civilization reveres as culture" as poisonous.[68]

The problem from Adorno and Horkheimer's perspective is the suggestion that the experience of art might cause the crew to turn on their master and take control of the ship—to perform in fact the mutiny that never takes place aboard the Pequod. For them, it would be more accurate to say that the music of Chopin at the movies or the fiction of Flaubert in mass-market paperback have come in the modern era rather to constitute for the working class the very wax stoppers that protect them from understanding. In their account, the conquest of bourgeois aesthetics by the culture industry is one of its most characteristic and pernicious maneuvers. "The abolition of educational privilege by disposing of culture at bargain prices does not admit the masses to the preserves from which they were formerly excluded but, under the existing social conditions, contributes to the decay of education and the progress of barbaric incoherence."[69] This divergence derives from the insistence of Adorno in particular that the mediated nature of the artwork's relationship to the reader or listener be taken into account in the analysis of culture. In his 1941 essay "The Radio Symphony," the broadcast of Beethoven on public radio offered "optimum conditions for retrogressive tendencies in listening, for the avalanche of fetishism which is overtaking music and burying it under the moraine of entertainment."[70] The same technologies of mass production that, for James, took up the legacy of British romanticism by extending the reach of culture across class barriers, for Adorno signaled its transformation into advertising, for the radio station itself or even for the consumer.[71] Similarly, Adorno recognized in the mass-market distribution of his favorite modernist authors a disturbing new development whereby literature was purchased not for reading but for decoration, providing indicators of prestige and status—hence, the Random House edition of Proust first produced in 1934 provided "cut-price exclusivity even in its appearance," set on a shelf next to a reproduction of Van Gogh's "Sunflowers" in the pseudo intellectual's apartment. "Even Kafka," Adorno sneered, "is becoming a fixture in the sub-let studio."[72] Far from James's vision of autoworkers reading *Sister Carrie* in their break at the factory, Adorno saw modernism in America reduced to ornament and in doing so anticipated the work of Pierre Bourdieu on the sociology of taste by three decades.[73]

Perhaps the clearest view we have on the divergence of James and Adorno comes from their disagreement over the part played by the con-

sumers of mass culture in determining its content. James's thesis, that mass culture expressed in sublimated form the revolutionary desires of the proletariat, depended largely on the claim that the creators and producers of gangster films and violent comic strips were able to "sense that mood in the population" that articulated the need for violent representations of autonomy. "To believe that the great masses of the people are merely passive recipients of what the purveyors of popular art give to them is in reality to see people as dumb slaves," he wrote in *American Civilization*, addressing something like the caricature of Adorno which has since been popularized in cultural studies. Adorno's position regarding this question was even more pessimistic, if also more sophisticated, than such a comparison would indicate. The consumers of mass culture were knowingly complicit in their own betrayal, buying and using "cultural commodities which, at the same time, they recognize as false."[74] The great achievement of the culture industry was that it "did not first produce the trash for the customers, but the customers themselves."[75] Indeed, in the bitterest pages of *Minima Moralia*, Adorno turned on James's own claims in defense of the movies as a popular form, arguing that "the Hegelian-sounding precept . . . that mass-art should reflect the real taste of the masses and not that of carping intellectuals, is usurpation."[76] Here we rediscover the essential foundations of the émigré culture critique in a series of urgent, competing attempts to construct a dialectical reading of Hollywood in the forties. Adorno's accusation of an inauthentic reading of Hegel, one he also reserved for Lukács, returns us once again to the risk of travesty and perversion attached to such an undertaking.[77] The dialectical analysis of culture will lay claim to a moment at which what appeared a distorted misreading is abruptly transformed into visionary clear-sightedness by a shift in social praxis. In the case of James's reading of American civilization, that moment was prohibited by history, for, as George Lipsitz argues, "the revolutionary changes that took place reflected the interests and aspirations of capital, rather than those of labor."[78]

With hindsight, we can now recognize in James's analyses an almost complete absence of attention to the social dynamic that, as Andrew Hoberek has argued, was to play a determining role in the development of US literature and culture in the postwar—the emergent white-collar class.[79] To use these terms is of course to evoke the work of C. Wright Mills, who as a Texan working at Columbia University in the mid-twentieth century might legitimately lay claim to an outsider status of his own. Throughout the 1940s, James emphasized the need to "Americanize" Marxism in order to

make it relevant to the historical specificities of the nation, and many of his writings from this period address themselves specifically to this task, but it was Mills who most effectively applied the principles of Marx to the postwar United States.[80] It is notable that he achieved this return to Marx in part through deliberately distancing himself from the Old Left, whose "Marxian view, popular in the American 'thirties, is now often inadequate."[81] Mills's *White Collar: The American Middle Class* (1951) subjected to analysis a phenomenon that neither Marx nor James had accounted for, but it did so using the tools of reification and alienation theory passed down to him through the canon of Marxist cultural criticism, from Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* to Lukács and then to the Frankfurt School. The book provides the most compelling account of the social consequences of the shift from industrial to intellectual labor as the dominant mode of reproduction in the United States during the mid-twentieth century. Mills's scathing critique of contemporary American society as "a great salesroom, an enormous file, an incorporated brain, a new universe of management and manipulation" has the effect of impressing on us how out of date was James's almost exclusive interest, just three years earlier, in the industrial and agricultural labor that accounted for less than half of all workers in the United States.[82] Mills's insight, absent in James's work, was into the ways in which the spread of technocratic white-collar labor had subsumed traditionally autonomous middle-class professional territories such as the education, entertainment, and university industries. "In the case of the white-collar man," he wrote in the introduction to the book, "the alienation of the wage-worker from the products of his work is carried one step nearer to its Kafka-like completion."[83] While James wrote of the affection industrial workers had for the machinery they operated, and the latent desire for unalienated control over their means of production, Mills was pointing out how growing trends were requiring workers to objectify not only their labor but also their own personalities.

Adorno, on the other hand, had a clearer grasp of the evolving logic of American labor, in ways which have made his culture critique more enduring. Indeed, much of Mills's work in the 1950s, especially his analysis of the "cultural apparatus," appears now as a continuation and development of Adorno's preoccupations in the 1940s.[84] In *Minima Moralia*, for example, Adorno mocks sociologists who "ponder the grimly comic riddle: where is the proletariat?" His analysis argues that class consciousness has been eroded by the illusion of equal opportunities provided by new employment practices in which "anyone can be appointed" to the management strata:

"Preference goes to those who fit in most exactly." Accordingly, "subjective class membership today shows a mobility that allows the rigidity of the economic order itself to be forgotten: rigid things can always be moved about."[85] As well as laying the ground for Mills's later work on the figure of the technician, Adorno's comments here indicate the sense in which the class analyses of the Old Left to which James belonged were already in danger of being rendered impotent by developments in the new science of "human resources" pioneered by Peter Drucker in the mid-1940s.[86]

If a reading of Mills opens James up to this kind of criticism, then it is also the case that certain elements of Adorno's critique appear vulnerable in the light of Mills's attack on the "cult of alienation" among American intellectuals: "'Alienation,' as used in middle-brow circles, is not the old detachment of the intellectual from the popular tone of life and its structure of domination; it does not mean estrangement from the ruling powers; nor is it a phase necessary to the pursuit of truth. It is a lament and a form of collapse into self-indulgence. It is a personal excuse for lack of political will. It is a fashionable way of being overwhelmed. In function, it is the literary counterpart to the cult of objectivity in the social sciences." [87] The fetishizing of alienation is the accusation that threatens all attempts by Europeans to engage critically with American mass culture. As we will discuss, in one way or another, all the figures addressed in this book demonstrated their awareness of this danger and attempted to circumvent it. George Grosz, for example, wrote of his contempt for the "croaking giants" of German modernism in exile, professing to prefer even the "syrupy American middle-class ideals" of popular aesthetics.[88] Raymond Chandler warned of the "cult of failure . . . embedded in highbrow aesthetics," choosing instead to write within the genre of the crime novel.[89] Even Nabokov, who publicly advocated early in his emigration the "much abused ivory tower" as a "fixed address" for the writer, still insisted upon it having "a telephone and an elevator just in case one might like to dash down to buy the evening paper or have a friend come up for a game of chess."[90] We have analyzed already James's persistent and indeed perverse attempts to extract a revolutionary positivity from the violence and sentimentality of the movies. And yet in the case of Adorno, we seem to discover the epitome of exilic alienation, summed up early in his American masterpiece, *Minima Moralia*: "For the intellectual, inviolable isolation is now the only way of showing some measure of solidarity. All collaboration, all the human worth of social mixing and participation, merely masks a tacit acceptance of inhumanity."[91] At

what point, we might legitimately ask, does a principled stance like this shade into a fetish of the type Mills outlines?

We should note first that Mills is concerned here with a particular "middle-brow" use of the term *alienation.* As we have seen, Adorno himself was by the late 1960s using the term cautiously, warning of its "glib" popular use. The process that Mills identifies in *White Collar* is that through which the very discourse of alienation had been debased and reified by appropriation and injudicious use in the products of the culture industry. One set of examples for this process can be identified in the cycle of novels from the period that took as their protagonists disaffected "cultural workmen" employed in advertising, script writing, and publishing.[92] Novels like Budd Schulberg's *What Makes Sammy Run?* (1941), Frederic Wakeman's *The Hucksters* (1946), and Charles E. Gorham's *The Gilded Hearse* (1948) depicted their protagonists' growing recognition of the emptiness of their cultural labor but diverted the promise of unalienated life toward romantic love rather than the workplace. Another set of examples, however, is offered by the reception of French existentialism in the middlebrow and popular press, which is discussed in more detail in chapter 4. The crude explications of existentialism in the late forties and early fifties gave to understand, as James put it in *American Civilization*, that "it is the expression of the complete impossibility of the intellectual being able to associate himself fully with any political or social grouping in society."[93] It is a slim distinction that separates many of Adorno's aphorisms in *Minima Moralia* from this critique of the isolated intellectual who turns away from the outside world in order to objectify personal suffering. In "Protection, help and counsel," for example, he writes, "If in Europe the esoteric gesture was often only a pretext for the blindest self interest, the concept of austerity, though hardly shipshape or watertight, still seems, in emigration, the most acceptable lifeboat. Only a few, admittedly, have a seaworthy example at their disposal. To most boarders, it threatens starvation or madness."[94] This return to the maritime imagery of voyage and shipwreck positions Adorno, perhaps consciously, as Ishmael after the sinking of the Pequod, preparing for the articulation of intellectual experience while floating amid the desolate waves. As an alternative to the ivory tower, figured in *Moby Dick* as the crow's nest, the metaphor abolishes any sense of the intellectual's privileged perspective on the world and proffers instead the survival of thought as a more modest objective. Unlike most of Adorno's American work, *Minima Moralia* dramatizes that subjective project of survival in the United States, and does so in full

awareness of its risks. As he writes in the book's dedication, "subjective reflection, even if critically alerted to itself, has something sentimental and anachronistic about itself: something of a lament over the course of the world" (16). The task Adorno sets himself is not to give in to the "temptation of lapsing into infidelity" through nostalgia or despair, and this resistance is what saves him from fetishizing the alienation of the intellectual. Alienation, rather than be domesticated by sentimentality, is preserved through its redoubling in estrangement devices of various kinds, and *Minima Moralia*'s literary effects take on the burden of its critical project, "the attempt to present aspects of our shared philosophy from the standpoint of subjective experience" (19).

Minima Moralia, Modernism, and the Novel of Émigré Estrangement

In this final section of the chapter, I want to turn attention more specifically to *Minima Moralia* as a text that offers an alternative to James's wholesale rejection of the high modernist tradition after 1945. While James, in a move that we will see echoed in the work of George Grosz and Raymond Chandler, consciously turned away from the institutionalization of modernist aesthetics in order to embrace more populist "homegrown" American forms, Adorno brought European high modernism to bear directly upon his subjective experience of exiled life. Although *Minima Moralia* is commonly read as a work of philosophy or critical theory after the tradition of Nietzsche's aphorisms and modeled in part after Horkheimer's *Dämmerung: Notizen in Deutschland* (*Twilight: Notes on Germany*, 1934), it also bears formal relation to the narrative genres of modernist autobiography or novel. It purposefully juxtaposes its own fragmentary and disorienting temporality with a series of periodizing markers that mark its emergence into and out of wartime. It also self-reflexively dramatizes the formation and tenuous survival of its author's own lived subjectivity, heard in the modulations of voice and style as they shape the articulation of childhood memories and everyday experience, from traveling around the city and chance social encounters to writer's block, insomnia, and the inevitability of evenings at the movies ("every visit to the cinema," he confides, "leaves me stupider and worse" [28]). *Minima Moralia* is much closer to the modernist novel than Adorno specialists tend to admit, and in particular it owes a tremendous debt to Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–25), the preoccupations of which it shares.[95] The first fragment in the book is entitled, "For Marcel

Proust," and protests the "departmentalization of mind" that would distinguish between the serious professional work of a scholar and the artistic pursuits of a "man of independent means" such as Proust (23). What would be the consequence, I want to ask, if we followed this invitation to transgress the division of intellectual labor by reading *Minima Moralia* in the tradition of the modernist novel and its formal properties of aesthetic estrangement, in which the commentary, as Adorno remarked of Proust, is "so thoroughly interwoven with the action that the distinction between the two disappears?"[96]

To accept this invitation would require probing the relationship between the Marxist-philosophical senses of alienation as *Entfremdung* and the notion of estrangement as literary strategy.[97] Estrangement here should not be understood as Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*, with its moment of epiphany or awakening.[98] Rather, for Adorno, estrangement operates as an aesthetic correlative to social alienation, which allows the novel to drive it further into the open where it can be called by name.

> The novel has long since, and certainly since the eighteenth century and Fielding's *Tom Jones*, had as its true subject matter the conflict between living human beings and rigidified conditions. In this process, alienation [*Entfremdung*] itself becomes an aesthetic device for the novel. For the more human beings, individuals and collectivities, become alienated [*fremde*] from one another, the more enigmatic they become to one another. The novel's true impulse, the attempt to decipher the riddle of external life, then becomes a striving for essence, which now for its part seems bewildering and doubly alien [*doppelt Fremd*] in the context of the everyday estrangement [*vertrauten Fremdheit*] established by social conventions.[99]

Adorno's avoidance of the term *Verfremdung* suggests that he wished to differentiate Brechtian estrangement from that he discovered especially in Proust, and it emphasizes how aesthetic estrangement grows out of social alienation as a means by which to redouble its subjective effect and thereby to ensure that, even as it is recognized and named, it remains itself—paradoxically both familiar (*vertrauten*) and strange. In *Minima Moralia*, this idea is developed in Adorno's statement that "The world is deeply ailing. He who cautiously adapts to it by this very act shares in its madness, while the eccentric alone would stand his ground and bid it rave no more" (213). Estrangement, then, is an aesthetic strategy for the survival of thought, since "sense can only endure in despair and extremity; it needs absurdity, in order not to fall victim to objective madness" (213).

Adorno used the resources of the modernist tradition not as a source of comfort but precisely as its opposite: a way of fulfilling an ethical imperative to sustain the discomfort of being unhomed while existing in a world where mass culture makes at every opportunity false promises of domestic ease. It is not generally acknowledged that it was the Los Angeles home and not the radio or film industries that provided the starting point for considering the culture industry in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, in which, at the beginning of chapter four, we read that "The older buildings around the concrete centers already look like slums, and the new bungalows on the outskirts, like the flimsy structures at international trade fairs, sing the praises of technological progress while inviting their users to throw them away after short use like tin cans."[100] *Minima Moralia* extends the argument made here that the idea of comfortable domesticity makes the dweller "all the more subservient to his adversary—the absolute power of capitalism," by insisting that "it is part of morality not to be at home in one's home."[101] This concern is developed in the way Adorno elucidates the relationship between the experience of exile and literary style, drawing on the extended metaphor of domesticity. Part Two, for example, begins with a moment of typically modernist self-reflexivity, as the writer turns attention to the act of writing: "In his text, the writer sets up house." Words themselves become "pieces of furniture that he sinks into," and "for a man who no longer has a homeland, writing becomes a place to live" (93). In what follows, however, Adorno renounces even such textual domesticity: "The demand that one harden oneself against self-pity implies the technical necessity to counter any slackening of intellectual tension with the utmost alertness, and to eliminate anything that has begun to encrust the work or to drift along idly, which may at an earlier stage have served, as gossip, to generate the warm atmosphere conducive to growth, but is now left behind, flat and stale. In the end, the writer is not even allowed to live in his writing" (93–94). Adorno's notion of exilic style is one which operates at the margins of domesticity, inviting identity with its surroundings only to turn aggressively against them at the moment they threaten to become comfortable. As we see in our later analyses of Chandler's and Nabokov's prose, and of Grosz's drawings, this ultimate distrust or refusal of style's promise of compensation for expatriation recurred across several media among European exiles from the early 1930s onwards, and tended to assume as its limit point the threat of homeliness, debased as the notion was after the Nazification of *Heimat*, the Bolshevization of *Rodina*, and the relinquishment of British domestic mythology at the end of Empire.

As Adorno began writing *Minima Moralia* at the height of World War II, domestic imagery was appropriated with renewed energy by American mass culture as a means of encouraging faith in national security and distinguishing distinctively American social values from those of the Nazi and Japanese regimes. Nowhere is this phenomenon more clearly visible than in Norman Rockwell's *Four Freedoms* series, composed after Franklin Delano Roosevelt's State of the Union address in 1941, and among the most reproduced works of US art in the nation's history. These realist images, which include representations of a family sitting down to a bounteous Thanksgiving feast and of parents watching tenderly over sleeping children, represent an apotheosis for American homely kitsch. The *Four Freedoms* images, for all their unabashed sentimentality, made a stringent demand for happiness and contentment as an intrinsic component of national identity in wartime, and as such they provide an illuminating context for Adorno's unremitting hostility to homeliness both in style and content. "The admonitions to be happy," he wrote, "voiced in concert by the . . . highly strung propaganda chiefs of the entertainment-industry, have about them the fury of the father berating his children for not rushing joyously downstairs when he comes home irritable from his office" (67). In passages such as this one, Adorno evokes the domestic tableau in inverted form, as the truth of Rockwell's paintings, but he does so only as preparation for an even more violent estrangement, for he goes on to add: "It is part of the mechanism of domination to forbid recognition of the suffering it produces, and there is a straight line of development between the gospel of happiness and the construction of camps of extermination so far off in Poland that each one of our countrymen can convince himself that he cannot hear the screams of pain" (67). This passage is an instance in which Adorno's critique consists not so much in argument as in a hyperbolic stylistic gesture that dares the reader to recognize its truth. The path to American homeliness leads back across the Atlantic to the death camps.

In the case of *Minima Moralia*, then, Adorno's legal designation as alien by both Germany and the United States, as a Jew and as a German, respectively, provided the occasion and the content for a confluence of his philosophical and stylistic preoccupations with *Entfremdung*. The result is an extraordinarily aggressive and concerted practice of estrangement on all levels, which attains at times an almost comically obsessive character, as when, for example, house slippers, the innocuous symbol of informality and ease in the home, are recast as the bearers of fury and loathing, "monu-

ments to the hatred of bending down" (117). There are foreglimpses here of *Minima Moralia*'s oblique kinship to Nabokov's novels of the intellectual migration and of their shared dramatization of encounters with hostile mass-produced domestic objects lurking inside every American home to threaten the European academic. In Nabokov's 1957 novel *Pnin*, for example, much humor is derived from the eponymous émigré's inability to negotiate the bewildering object world he encounters in his various rented accommodations, to the extent that "his life was a constant war with insensate objects that fell apart, or attacked him, or refused to function, or viciously got themselves lost as soon as they entered the sphere of his existence."[102] As in *Minima Moralia*, alienation from the domestic object world is articulated through strategies of estrangement in style, perhaps most obviously at the moment when Pnin is described dreamily watching his landlady's washing machine, "just for the joy of watching through that porthole what looked like an endless tumble of dolphins with the staggers."[103] The difference between Pnin's moment of aesthetic absorption and Adorno's refusal of such redemption can be expressed through the latter's elevation of unhomeliness to an ethical principle, while for Nabokov it provides occasion for various forms of disinterested aesthetic pleasure.

The comparison, however, helps us to think through an important affective dimension held in common by a range of exilic figures in their encounter with mass culture—the taboo on sentimentality, which operates as a kind of absolute law for *Minima Moralia* and *Pnin*. The close relationship between modern alienation and images of unhomeliness was established by Marx in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, written while he, too, rented rooms in exile.

> But the poor man's basement dwelling is an uncongenial element, an "alien, restrictive power which only surrenders itself to him at the expense of his sweat and blood." He cannot look upon it as his home, as somewhere he can call his own. Instead, he finds himself in someone else's house, in an *alien* house, whose owner lies in wait for him every day, and threatens to evict him if he fails to pay the rent. At the same time he is aware of the difference in quality between his own dwelling and those *otherworldly* human dwellings which exist in the heaven of wealth.[104]

Marx's prose in this case as elsewhere is unafraid to appropriate the nineteenth-century discourse of sentimentality in order to reinforce its argument for social change. In the century between this essay and the works

under discussion, the mass cultural reification of domestic sentimentality meant not only that Nabokov and Adorno transformed their own exilic homelessness into a necessary virtue but also that they were further obliged to purge it of pathos.

Accordingly, the inhabitation of rented rooms, hotels, and motels was proclaimed by both writers as preferable to the alternative of inhabiting their own property, yet they also focused relentlessly on the inhospitality of paying accommodation in the United States. *Pnin*'s plot is driven by Timofey Pnin's attempts to find a comfortable place to live, which are thwarted by drafts, broken heaters, strange noises, and invasive landlords. More famously, and as discussed in chapter 4, *Lolita* dwells at some length on the strangely authoritarian tendencies of motels and hotels, which, as for Adorno's diagnosis of the culture industry more generally, menacingly impress on their customers the obligation to enjoy themselves in strictly prescribed ways (in contrast to the luxurious European hotel run by Humbert's father). One of *Minima Moralia*'s most striking fragments, entitled "Chilly Hospitality," enters into dialogue with these concerns by launching a violent attack on the American hotel as an "empty husk of rooms" in which (like Humbert) the writer is "woken in the small hours by unfailing central heating" and the true function of the hostess is "to see to it that the incoming guest does not even choose for himself the table at which he is to be processed" (125–26). It is the drugstore, rather than the hotel, to which Adorno ultimately flees for his breakfast, "behind whose inhospitable counter a juggler with fried-eggs, crispy bacon and ice-cubes proves himself the last solicitous host" (125).

What interests me most in reading *Pnin* and *Minima Moralia* together, however, is the way in which, after reading *Pnin*, Adorno himself threatens to lapse into a Pninian character and thus, in spite of all his alienating intentions, solicits the kind of cruel pathos that Nabokov's novel creates through its dramatization of the narrator. For, while Adorno's own ironic voice continually fends off the possibility of homeliness in the United States, *Pnin*'s narrator articulates the émigré's suffering from the point of view of one already assimilated in precisely the way Adorno refuses. The unnamed narrator of Nabokov's novel is the Russian émigré academic who, unlike either Timofey Pnin or Adorno, gains tenure at his institution, makes his life into a success and the United States into a home. Most importantly, though, he is one for whom estranging style (at which he excels) is separate from alienated experience. In this sense, he is one who is "allowed to live in his writ-

ing." This narrator presents a more sophisticated strategy for Nabokov to observe the taboo on sentimentality, for as Michael Wood's brilliant reading of *Pnin*'s narrator suggests, his condescending cruelty functions as a negative dialectic through which Nabokov can banish genuine pathos from the work and thereby save it from contamination by sentimentality.[105] How easy it is for the Nabokovian reader to form habits of reading that find in Adorno's indignant critique of slippers, or his flight to the soda jerk in search of a "solicitous host," a typically Pninian gesture, a desperate, Pyrrhic, and ultimately comic attempt to cope with exiled life in the American 1940s.

Minima Moralia can also be productively read alongside the other great novel of émigré intellectual alienation in the United States, Christopher Isherwood's *A Single Man* (1964). This novel narrates the final day in the life of George, an English scholar who lives and teaches literature in Southern California, where Adorno lived from 1940 until his departure from the United States. *A Single Man* shares too many of the specific concerns of *Minima Moralia* to be discussed here in any detail, but its central problem might be adequately expressed by the epigram with which Adorno opens part one of his work: "life does not live" (22). Following the death of his lover a year previously, George's existence has become that of an automaton whose life is in danger of losing all affect other than hatred. The opening of the novel foregrounds both George's loss of humanity and the stylistic response to the literary problem of articulating it. "Waking up begins with saying *am* and *now*. That which has awoken then lies for a while staring up at the ceiling and down into itself until it has recognized *I*, and therefore deduced *I am, I am now*. *Here* comes next, and is at least negatively reassuring; because *here*, this morning, is where it has expected to find itself; what's called *at home*."[106] The novel builds on the work established earlier in Isherwood's career by his well-known "I am a camera" style, an extravagant performance of estrangement from an alienated subject, which paradoxically brings us closer to it, another example of what Adorno ascribed to Proust as "a second alienation of the alienated world as a means to its restitution."[107] This opening alludes to the awakenings that initiate Proust's *A la recherche* and Kafka's "The Metamorphosis," in which the subject is obliged to reconstitute itself after sleep, and *A Single Man* takes these European modernists, along with Joyce, as its primary models, albeit having subjected them to ironic reversals of various types. Like Adorno, Isherwood finds in them appropriate strategies for articulating the demise of what is called in *Minima Moralia* "the old subject, now historically condemned" (16).

If Adorno saw in the motels, movies, and freeways of Southern California the condemnation of the old human subject, then, in terms of periodization, *A Single Man* represents its historical eradication. The novel's narrator looks back on the 1940s in his neighborhood as the moment of "the Great Change," when the "defiantly Bohemian" inhabitants were replaced by philistine World War II veterans from the East, and "one by one, the cottages which used to reek of bathtub gin and reverberate with the poetry of Hart Crane have fallen to the occupying army of coke-drinking television-watchers" (13). Indeed, the crisis of wartime from which *Minima Moralia* emerged is already in *A Single Man* a moment of nostalgia. "In old those old crises of the twenties, the thirties, the war—each one of them has left its traces upon George, like an illness—what was terrible was the fear of annihilation. Now we have with us a far more terrible fear, the fear of survival" (67). Like *Minima Moralia*, then, *A Single Man* poses the question of how it is possible for a European intellectual to survive in the age of American mass culture. Yet, it offers an even more radically pessimistic answer to Adorno, for in the novel humanist thought is already effectively dead, life dwelling principally in the body's functions and in various states of pure affect. Ruskin, in a parody of Bloom's outhouse reading in *Ulysses*, becomes simply "today's perfect companion for five minutes on the toilet" (12).

Nowhere is the triumph of mass culture more clearly expressed than in George's spirited defense of the American motel when it is criticized as lifeless and inhospitable by a sophisticated colleague at his university. George's argument is launched from the idea that "an American motel isn't *a* room in *an* hotel, it's *the* Room, definitively, period. There is only one; *The Room.* And it's a symbol—an advertisement in three dimensions, if you like—for our way of life . . . We've reduced the things of the material plane to mere symbolic conveniences. And why? Because that's the essential first step. Until the material plane has been defined and relegated to its proper place, the mind can't ever be truly free" (69–70). This is a particularly important moment in *A Single Man* because of the way in which it illustrates the complete separation of thought from the singularity of lived experience, precisely the stakes over which Adorno struggles. George, it is made clear to us, has absolutely no investment in his own argument for American progress but rather, like "a performer at the circus" is invested only in its rhetorical elegance, which refigures the logic of mass culture as philosophical idealism. "Essentially, we're creatures of spirit. Our life is all in the mind. That's why we're completely at home with symbols like the American

Motel-Room" (71). The rest of the novel works insistently to demonstrate how this speech is an act of intellectual bad faith, in which George, as an Englishman, a homosexual, and an intellectual, is neither at home in California nor leading the free life of the spirit. On the contrary, just hours earlier he had entered his lecture theatre feeling "brilliant, vital, challenging, slightly mysterious and, above all, *foreign*" (42–43). Far from a life of hermetic contemplation, George's experience, like that of Pnin, is characterized by entanglement in a material world of objects and unstable bodies that will never allow him to feel at home.

"To speak immediately of the immediate," writes Adorno at the beginning of *Minima Moralia*, "is to behave much as those novelists who drape their marionettes in imitated bygone passions like cheap jewelry, and make people who are no more than component parts of machinery act as if they still had the capacity to act as subjects, and as if something depended on their actions" (15). We have seen how the campus novels of Nabokov and Isherwood advance responses to this challenge, in which the stylistic resources of modernism are deployed in order to negate the immediate, even as the costs of such a maneuver are measured in cruelty and historical pessimism. But in adjusting the frame of reference for reading Adorno's work to include the novel, I hope also that some of these insights might return to *Minima Moralia* itself, in foregrounding the fragility and pathos of its own subjectivity, the resolutely ethical underpinning of its insistence on remaining unhomed in America, and the freight of its estranging style.

I have taken the opportunity to dwell on the exilic experiences of James and Adorno in order to suggest how the great strength of their respective analyses of mass culture lies in those moments when theory is wrenched from the abstract and returned to the historical grounds of everyday alienated life and to what I would like to call, simply, coping: James's passionate love letters to Constance Webb, which tabulate the interweaving of Hegel with Bette Davis, or Adorno's dogged vigilance against everything from his slippers to his horoscope. I have argued that both figures became particularly attuned to the alienating qualities of American mass culture through reflecting on their own exilic lives and that they used the tools their European training had given them in order to conceptualize their own experience, in fiction, memoir, philosophy, and letters. This is not to trivialize their work, for the stakes of these attempts could hardly have been higher—for James the possibility of imminent revolution, and for Adorno the continuation of thought itself. From today's perspective, when the systematic

stratification of culture against which they struggled is now so entrenched as to seem invisible, it is salutary to remind ourselves that it might have been considered in such terms at all, as a crisis point in world history.

James's willingness to declare US mass culture, however experimentally and counterintuitively, as bearing the seeds of positive revolutionary change in an era when it was under near-constant attack by an institutionalized elite is itself a dialectical example from which to learn. Such a reversal of valences lies at the heart of my argument for returning to popular forms that were often maligned in their time, such as pulp fiction and cartoons. Indeed, James was one of the voices who urged a reconsideration of Hammett and Chandler as important and accomplished artists at a time when Adorno would scarcely have credited them. In this sense, James's work opens up a gap through which we must pass in order to reconstruct other critical possibilities that were gradually buried in the early Cold War. This is work that Adorno seems ill suited to prepare us for, even if we will return to him at several points in discussions of style. It should be kept in mind that we are now proceeding into an analysis of artists and writers who, by launching themselves into the American cultural marketplace, followed a different path from that which James and Adorno followed in their own exilic careers. If Adorno claimed that to adapt to the world was to share in its madness, then we are now descending into that realm of instability and complicity where the relation between theory and practice is always compromised.

2 The Yankee from Berlin

George Grosz

George Grosz's transition, from the extremes of the Berlin avant-garde during World War I and the Weimar years, to the realist and often romantic style of his mature American phase, presents a conundrum to cultural historians. The official narrative, which presided during Grosz's own lifetime (and was propagated largely by him), assumes the form of a fairy tale.[1] It tells of the artist's traumatic experience of the Great War and of his subsequent submission to the chaotic zeitgeist that sublimated the violence of the trenches into an unprecedented cultural attack on the Wilhelmine bourgeoisie. This was his period of self-destructive and nihilist Dada experiment, which found him innovating new techniques, such as the photomontage, as well as performing confrontational events intended to provoke outrage and confusion among the staid German middle classes. As the Dada movement lost its momentum in the early 1920s, Grosz became famous for his pointed caricatures satirizing the German establishment, and he devoted his art, for a short period, to the service of the Communist Party. During the Weimar years, his work was eclectic, ranging from portraits in the style of the New Objectivity to disorienting cubist cityscapes, social observation, and grotesque paintings of sexual violence. In 1932, however, he visited the United States and chose to emigrate the following year. In doing so, he made one of the biggest U-turns in the history of modern art. Grosz embraced American culture with uncritical enthusiasm, exchanging European modernism for popular American illustration. His heroes were not the darlings of the art establishment, such as Picasso or Man Ray, but Norman Rockwell, Charles Dana Gibson, and Floyd Davis. Gaining his citizenship in 1938, he reinvented himself as an unassuming suburbanite and an artist committed to an unpretentious, wholesome art. As he put it in his autobiography, "Secretly I felt closer to those syrupy American ideals than to those of the

croaking giants of the so-called avant-garde."[2] By 1950, Grosz felt able to write that "since coming to America I have changed. I have become more realistic. My struggle is for a clearer, rounder form."[3]

Inevitably, the dramatic contours of this narrative have been interrogated and modified by a number of contemporary scholars. Although Grosz, in his American years, was dismissive of his experimentalism in the Berlin Dada group, it has nevertheless been his early work, done between 1915 and 1925, that has received the most critical attention. Historians of the avant-garde have naturally placed Grosz's early photomontages, his futurist-influenced cityscapes, and his involvement in the famous 1921 Berlin Dada fair at the center of his oeuvre.[4] Monographs on Grosz, meanwhile, have often concentrated on the years before his move to the United States, giving coverage to his Dada years, as well as to his satirical and allegorical work of the 1920s.[5] Other studies have redressed the perceived neglect of the American years by paying particular attention to the achievements of the darkly apocalyptic visionary paintings that Grosz continued to produce throughout the thirties and forties, alongside his realist landscapes.[6] Barbara McCloskey has argued that, despite his publicly announced assimilation to American culture, Grosz's work in the second half of his career was unable to escape the traumas of his European experience and "became, in the end, a painful process of working through these hauntings without the promise of transcendence or catharsis."[7] Consensus has emerged over the unresolved fault lines in his American career, the sense in which "the utopia of America as the 'Land of Milk and Honey' had never really materialized for Grosz."[8] As a result, critical accounts have been organized around a series of binaries—Europe and America, experimentalism and convention, modernism and popularism, success and failure, resistance and betrayal—which are understood as symptomatic of Grosz's own artistic and ideological limitations. Siegfried Gohr's analysis is representative: "In the U.S. Grosz became torn between two seemingly irreconcilable opposites: socially committed art and art for its own sake."[9] The aim of this chapter is to reorient our sense of Grosz's transatlantic career by pushing beyond the binarism that has dominated the discussions so far in order to think dialectically about how the United States functioned as an imaginative and material construct for Grosz throughout his entire career.

To approach Grosz in this way, it is necessary to reconsider the oblique correspondence between the theoretical principles of European Dada and the development of mass production and the culture industry in the first

half of the twentieth century. Man Ray pronounced that "Dada is impossible in New York. New York is Dada," and we will see that such concepts of an organically evolved, accidental avant-garde inherent in American culture are vital to our understanding of Grosz's ambivalent relationship to his adopted nation.[10] American popularism functioned as the omnipresent critique of the European avant-gardes insofar as it represented simultaneously the fulfillment of several of their utopian aspirations, as well as the political and aesthetic costs of such objectives. In examining Grosz's engagements with American mass culture, then, we are able to reflect critically upon the melding of registers in midcentury, which is so often conceived monolithically as the clash of high and low. Rather than abandon our exploration of the contradictions of his career to explanations that rely on the idea of failure, we can use those impasses as a category of reflection in their own right which might further our understanding both of Dada and of the institutions of American culture in the period. Critical discourse on high and low, as well as on distinctions between European and American cultures, has itself become reified in ways that a rereading of Grosz's oeuvre can reveal and unsettle.

To this end, I'll take three moments in Grosz's career—from the early, middle, and late periods—and engage in a close reading of their situations with regard to Americas both material and imagined. We begin with the drawings of the 1910s inspired by Grosz's childhood obsessions with a violent American mythology. At this point, Grosz was already building a complex and ambivalent set of responses to a nation he had not yet set foot in. Then we will turn to the drawings, paintings, and montages published in *Americana* and *Vanity Fair* during the first years of Grosz's émigré life, which provide an acute sense of the dilemmas facing the artist in his attempts to reconcile his early visions of America and his own artistic sensibilities to the demands of the market. The third and final moment to be addressed is Grosz's return to photomontage in the 1950s, when he produced a series of works that serve as a kind of coda to his career, critiquing postwar consumerism but also indicating the artist's own guilty complicity in that ideology.

Memories of the Frontier

Grosz's engagement with imagined Americas was of great significance to his aesthetic practice throughout his entire career, dating from the formative encounters with violent pulp fiction that occurred during his childhood

and adolescence. In the years up to his emigration, America did not provide, as some have argued, a "counterimage" to contrast with Germany, nor an avenue for escapism.[11] Rather, America was the space in which Grosz was able to articulate the paradoxes and tensions that structured his Dadaist practice and constituted his vision of Western modernity. As a European using the idea of America as a perspectival tool for thinking about modernity, Grosz was far from alone. During the 1920s, comparative cultural analyses of the United States and Western European nations were commonplace. In his 1928 study of American culture, the German commentator Arthur Feiler noted that, "When we visit America, we see Europe from a new perspective. It seems different from what we had imagined." Feiler's remark was symptomatic of a tendency among European intellectuals to reassess European civilization in a transatlantic light.[12] The first difference between Grosz and such figures is that until 1932 Grosz had never crossed the Atlantic. Nevertheless, he rehearsed his American exile long before the event. "By the way," he wrote to his friend Otto Schmalhausen in 1916, "did you hear that the painter George Grosz is supposed to have fled abroad? . . . One hears talk of southern California."[13] An exile in his own nation, Grosz created for himself a series of identities and environments that enabled a form of ambivalent Dada play, which engaged rather than evaded Germany's own crisis of modernity through a dialectic of recognition and defamiliarization. The second key difference between Grosz's American visions and those of his compatriots, however, was that while figures such as Arthur Feiler operated within the conventional parameters of early twentieth century nationalism, with its concomitant emphasis on the spatial and cultural integrity of the state, Grosz was resolutely transnational. Disengaged from its geographic boundaries, the United States became for him a set of productive and yet violent contradictions inhering within the logic of capitalism in its globalizing historical phase, applicable on both sides of the Atlantic.

On many occasions throughout his life, Grosz emphasized the importance of his early exposure to American frontier mythologies through mass-distributed print. He claimed to have copied out the whole of James Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* in longhand as a child and was familiar too with Mark Twain.[14] He also loved the Wild West fiction of Karl May, especially his earliest work, "when he was still a pulp writer."[15] May, perhaps the most popular writer in Germany in the nineteenth century, had never

been to the Americas, but authenticity was apparently far from Grosz's priorities as he later recalled reading numerous "cheap German magazines reflecting, with blood and thunder illustrations, the frontier life of America."[16] His reading habits were broadly reflective of the extraordinary popularity of American frontier and Wild West narratives in fin-de-siècle Germany, where they represented between a half and a third of all mass-distribution pamphlet fiction.[17] Grosz also recalled his enthusiastic reading of Nick Carter stories, which German pamphlet publishers imitated and translated from the US versions in the early twentieth century.[18] The detective's sensationalist battles with criminals were so popular that, by the time Grosz was fifteen years old, 45,000 Nick Carter pamphlets were being sold every week, leading conservative groups (unsuccessfully) to campaign against their subversive influence on the German youth, citing their endorsement of violence, socialism, and atheism.[19] The chaotic transatlantic export of dime fiction from America to Germany before World War I—which included the legitimate sale of rights as well as illegal pirating and undisguised imitation—was Grosz's introduction not only to American mythologies but also to a barely regulated transnational marketplace that made a mockery of efforts to isolate and protect a national German *Kultur*.

In a revealing profile written by the art critic Thomas Craven in 1935, Grosz reflected on his exposure to American popular culture during childhood. "There can be no doubt that my first experiences, and my first efforts to draw and paint, were strongly colored by my interest in the New World. Nor was I alone in that interest. To most of my companions, America was really and truly the land of the free."[20] Comments like these have led scholars to identify the United States as a symbol of liberty in Grosz's early work, set up in contrast to the restrictive social and cultural establishment of imperial Germany.[21] We must ask, however, exactly what kind of freedom Grosz is referring to here. From those early frontier narratives, he took with him for the rest of his career a sense that modern liberty was always shaped by unrestrained self-interest and violent individualism. This is evident in an incident he recounted to Craven concerning his reading of frontier pulp fiction about lynchings.

> Inspired by a description of a lynching in Alabama, I called my gang together, and persuaded them, with true southern eloquence, that we must take the law into our own hands. We captured a poor old darkey who had been accused—rightly or wrongly I do not know—of cruelty to animals, bound him to a tree, and threat-

> ened him with a beating. The poor negro howled with fright and his cries brought us quickly to our senses. We unbound him, after he had sworn not to tell on us, and sneaked home, and for a long time were obedient little German boys.[22]

The two passages I am quoting here were printed on the same page of text, and yet Grosz gives no sign of acknowledging the irony of their juxtaposition. The celebration of the "land of the free" becomes the opportunity to perform uninhibited violence against social or racial others, and the individual's freedom becomes the right to enforce another's unfreedom. This type of paradoxical structure, and the ambivalence informing its articulation, is typical of Grosz's representations of the United States from his World War I drawings through to the collages he produced in his final years. In each case, a set of apparently contradictory concepts is presented in dramatic collision, in such a way as to interrogate the premises of the concepts themselves. In addition, this episode also provides a neat allegorical narrative of Grosz's eventual emigration to the United States, in presenting the moment at which his virtual role-playing encountered the real, where violent self-expression gave way to conformity. Grosz's response—the "obedient little boy"—is only another role prefiguring the unassuming suburban persona that he took on in the United States, and it anticipates his much-derided shift toward the realist, romantic, and kitschy forms that he believed the market wanted.

Grosz's American role-playing was not confined to childhood. During World War I, as the Dada movement began to reach Berlin, as well as Anglicizing (or Americanizing) his first name to "George," Grosz took to dressing up as various characters resurrected from his childhood reading, such as the American gangster. He covered the walls of his studio with advertisements for American cigarettes and liquor, as well as images of American public figures such as John D. Rockefeller, cut out from the illustrated newspapers. These images, as his friend Herzfelde recounted, were "signed"—for example, one read "to my dear old friend Chinganchuk [*sic*], in faithful memory, his old friend Thomas A. Edison."[23] Another, purporting to be from Henry Ford, read, "I'm waiting to show you Detroit again, but we must be a little more moderate."[24] As Brigid Doherty has argued, many of Grosz's World War I-era works engage with notions of regression to childhood and with childish forms of sexuality and aggression.[25] Similarly, these American projections gesture back to Grosz's childhood reading, as the allusion to Chingachgook confirms. However, they also register another of the disso-

nant tensions that structure Grosz's engagement with the United States, this time between technological rationalization and primitivism. The choice of Edison, Rockefeller, and Ford for Grosz's imaginative projections evokes the revolution in mass production which made the United States the very symbol of industrial modernity in the early twentieth century. On the other hand, the persistence of the primitive savage in the form of Grosz's chosen identity as Chingachgook gestures back to a preindustrial frontier mythology associated with dime fiction. It is no coincidence that this resurgence in Grosz's American role-playing came at the same time as the onset of Berlin Dada, for it constitutes nothing less than an ambivalent Dada critique of the rhetoric of modernity itself, in which the captains of industry and progress are discovered out drinking in the bars of Detroit with Native Americans of the colonial period. The discourse of efficiency and rationalization is disrupted here by the reemergence of the violent libidinal energies of the frontier.

Mary Nolan has described the way in which Germany's perception of the United States underwent a transition immediately after World War I, from the paradigm of wild, untamed nature found in pulp fiction to a potential model for German economic and industrial reconstruction.[26] Fordism in particular began to receive detailed and wide attention, with numerous industrialists traveling to the United States in order to witness the process of mass production firsthand. As Nolan formulates it, "America, Americanism and Fordism provided not only a model to emulate or modify, but a vivid, colorful and controversial language in which to debate modernity."[27] The moment of transition broadly corresponds to Grosz's own development from adolescence into adulthood and can be seen reflected in his incorporation of Ford and Edison into his role-playing. What makes Grosz's case so interesting, however, is the way in which two mythologies of the United States are brought into collision in his work during the war, rather than one superseding the other, as happened in public discourse. This melding has the disorienting effect of celebrating modernity while rejecting its temporal logic. While some European commentators during the 1920s juxtaposed the United States' economic development with its cultural backwardness, Grosz's drawings, in a typically Dada gesture, collapsed the two.[28]

This is the conceptual framework within which I would like to read the series of drawings engaging with American themes dating from 1915–16 and included in the 1917 portfolios *Erste George Grosz-Mappe* and *Kleine Grosz-Mappe*. *Erinnerung an New York* (*Memory of New York*, figure 1) in par-

Figure 1. George Grosz, *Erinnerung an New York* (*Memory of New York*), 1915–16. Transfer lithograph on Japan paper, sheet: 19 3/4 × 15 3/8 in. Harvard Art Museums, Busch-Reisinger Museum. © Estate of George Grosz, Princeton, NJ / DACS 2015.

ticular, has attracted much interest partly due to its enigmatic title, which gestures toward the kind of temporal disruption we have been discussing.[29] While the title functions on a biographical level as an allusion to Grosz's cultural memory of the United States, in the context of its depiction of the futuristic metropolis it also performs the strange reversion of modernity into the past, at a moment when the carnage on the various fronts of World War I was throwing narratives of European enlightenment progress into crisis. Critical accounts of *Memory of New York* have noted that the style of representing the city owes much to futurism and constitutes a response to changing ways of experiencing urban life in the early twentieth century.[30] Unlike in futurism, however, the drawing is suffused with elements, begin-

ning with its title, that cast doubt on optimistic accounts of modernity. A useful point of contrast here is the exuberant New York paintings of Joseph Stella, composed in the same period (see plate 1a). The Italian Stella emigrated to New York in 1896 and, like Grosz, was heavily influenced by futurism. While Stella's dazzling representations of New York landmarks such as Brooklyn Bridge emerge out of intricately regulated geometric patterns that celebrate the energy and technical skill of American urban engineering, Grosz's aggressively childlike lines compromise the order and integrity of the modern city even as they evoke its explosive energies. Chaotic and unregulated, Grosz's cityscape is full of buildings in conflict with one another, represented through overlapping forms. If futurism articulated a desire to abolish the past as part of on onward rush into the future, in *Memory of New York* Grosz drags the future back into the territory of violent and irrational childish fantasies.

Above all, though, *Memory of New York* has been viewed as symptomatic of a kind of exceptionalism in Grosz's imagination, a portrait of a city "in dimension and character . . . without precedent in history."[31] The logic of this claim is that the representation of a unique, technologically advanced United States with such barely controlled energy functioned as a contrasting challenge to the staid and rigidly conservative structures of authority in wartime Germany. The difficulty is that such approaches are unable to account for the principle of interchangeability that operates in Grosz's drawings from this period. Far from inscribing a unique exceptionalist New York or United States, Grosz is giving expression to a homogenizing tendency that represents one of the key points of intersection between Dada practice and the transatlantic circulation of American mass culture. "What did the Dadas do?" Grosz asked in 1925, "They said it's all the same."[32] The incongruous figure of the Native American waving the stars and stripes in the bottom left corner and the superimposition of Wild West imagery on the East Coast metropolis is not so much a comment on the necessity of the *Stadtindianer*, or Asphalt Cowboy, as a reflection of the way in which the whole concept of region was emptied out in the German versions of American frontier dime novels that circulated in the early part of the century. In some stories, lush jungles were found covering the arid territories of the South West, while the term *prairie* was used to describe any unsettled region of North America.[33] The emergence of the detective genre in dime novels of the 1890s took some time to distinguish itself from the frontier narrative, and the West continued to be used as a setting, if only as "merely a stage for

the activities of detectives, sometimes from New York, who fought miscellaneous criminals."[34] In other words, within the dime novel, regional differences were effectively effaced, while the ideological content and the form itself, with its sensationalized prose and "blood and thunder" illustrations, remained identical across the range of the market.

Memory of New York thus returns us once more to Grosz's childhood reading and the development of his role-playing, in which parts were readily exchanged for one another without logic or warning, whether Huckleberry Finn, New York gangster, or Chingachgook.[35] In this drawing, New York functions in a purely synecdochic fashion for the whole of the United States. We might note, for example, the existence of the oddly named "Chicago Beach Hotel" (are these also the skyscrapers of Chicago?), while the United States itself is reduced to the miscellaneous content of its mass-produced iconography—dime novels, national flags, advertisements, and the urban skyline. In this sense, *Memory of New York* functions as a complex virtualization of the United States. Paul Giles, in his study *Virtual Americas*, uses virtualization as a conceptual tool for understanding the defamiliarizing function of the transatlantic imaginary in American literature. "It is as if the observer were seeing native landscapes refracted or inverted in a foreign mirror."[36] It is important that we realize how Grosz's representations of America in this period are twice removed from their "natural" source, first by the transnational projection of American mythologies and then by the artist's deliberate travesties of those mythologies. We have seen how this travesty works partly through the imposition of Grosz's aggressive line drawing and palimpsestic overlaying of forms, but it also works through the forced juxtaposition of the diverse elements of American mythology (pioneer spirit, rugged individualism, technological advance, material abundance and so forth). In *Memory of New York*, the montage-like coercion of such elements into a single frame to compete with one another has the effect of undermining their various claims to natural American self-identification. This image stages the return of American mythologies to their point of origin, but it does so in such a way that they are unable to reintegrate themselves into the national identity and thus remain unnaturalized as interchangeable, floating signifiers.

The particular form of national self-identity that Grosz repeatedly destabilizes in the two wartime portfolios is that of political borders. In *Memory of New York*, this is signaled by the distinctively German cupola that rises incongruously from among the skyscrapers in the top center of the drawing.

Rather than a failure of Grosz imagination, this motif can be understood as an indication of the work's transnationalism, the way in which America is deterritorialized and made to function on a conceptual level as a synecdochic representation of Western modernity. Cupolas like this one recur throughout the portfolios regardless of whether the setting is Germany or the United States. (In the same way, a cinema with a sign reading "Kino" is found in the Wild West in the drawing *Goldgräber* [*Gold-digger*].) This transnational principle becomes clearer as we turn to *Goldgräberbar* (*Gold-diggers' Saloon*, figure 2), in the context of its placement in *Kleine Grosz-Mappe.* Like *Memory of New York*, *Gold-diggers' Saloon* has been interpreted as an expression of Grosz's vision of America as a land of adventure, "a positive vision of the US during the war years."[37] Here, we are presented with a scene from the old West, featuring surly cowboys armed with guns and knives, drinking and playing cards. However, as we turn the page of the portfolio to view the previous drawing, we discover a scene so similar to the previous one that it can only be intentionally designed by Grosz to revisit it. In *Kaffé* (figure 3), the Wild West has been transplanted to Berlin (or is it the other way around?), as one after another of the features from *Gold-diggers' Saloon* recur: the cards, the knife, the gun, the drinking and smoking, even the dog (though he has now awoken). The pictures even adopt the same compositional shape, crowned in each case by a woman with exposed breasts. The differences between these two drawings, at the crudest level, are reduced to the most insignificant of details—hats for instance, the hastily assembled cactus in the top left corner, or the spur attached to one cowboy's boot. Finally, though, it is the superscription of text, in the form of the word "saloon," which tells us where we are. If there is one defining feature of Grosz's American scenes from this time, it is the omnipresence of the textual sign, which retains the same structural function it does in the streets—that is, to discriminate between products that are otherwise indistinguishable, to introduce difference where there is none. The creation of the illusion of difference is, of course, the strategy behind the development of modern advertising, and now we have another sense in which to understand Grosz's reference to the "land of the free." This, as Adorno and Horkheimer were to write in their critique of the American culture industry, "proves to be the freedom to be the same."[38]

In fact, neither *Erste George Grosz-Mappe* nor *Kleine Grosz-Mappe* sold particularly widely, since they were marketed as portfolios in an expensive limited-edition format, each drawing printed on high-quality Japanese pa-

Figure 2. George Grosz, *Goldgräberbar (Gold-diggers' Saloon)*, 1915–16. Transfer lithograph on Japan paper, sheet: 8 5/8 × 5 7/16 in. The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies, Los Angeles County Museum of Art. © Estate of George Grosz, Princeton, NJ/DACS 2015. Photo credit: © 2015. Digital Image Museum Associates/LACMA/Art Resource NY/Scala, Florence.

per.[39] On one hand, Grosz retained the distribution strategies of the prewar Expressionist avant-garde by using a prestigious format, which imbued the artwork with the values associated with unique luxury products. On the other, the drawings themselves announce their sameness as soon as the portfolio is opened and thus produce a tension between the work itself and the mode of its distribution within the art establishment. In his autobiography, Grosz wrote of the strong association he held at this time between the United States and "new forms of business efficiency . . . the systems of Ford, Taylor and others," and here we find many of the production values associ-

Figure 3. George Grosz, *Kaffé* (*Café*), 1915–16. Transfer lithograph on Japan paper, sheet: 8 5/8 × 5 7/16 in. The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies, Los Angeles County Museum of Art. © Estate of George Grosz, Princeton, NJ / DACS 2015. Photo credit: © 2015. Digital Image Museum Associates / LACMA / Art Resource NY / Scala, Florence.

ated with those systems at work in the drawings: the suggestion of speed of assembly, for example, and the exchangeability of various parts within a unified system.[40] Indeed, the title of one of Grosz's lost photocollages from the early 1920s indicates the collusion between Taylorism and his art quite precisely: "Brain of my Brother-in-Law M. E. Fimmen, New York, or Marshal Grosz demands Taylor's System for Painting."[41] In 1923, meanwhile, a review in Harold Loeb's little magazine *Broom* described Grosz's work as "constitut[ing] a complete economy of means and forces, almost a Taylor system of drawing, everything calculated to produce the maximum of ef-

fectiveness."[42] If Fordism sought to lower the price of mass-produced goods in order to make them affordable to workers, however, Grosz's drawings were sold at a high price to the bourgeois elite. This contradiction, exposing the falsely privileged status of the art object, was both an ironic critique of the artistic establishment and a self-lacerating gesture of complicity, a combination that was to become increasingly familiar as the German Dada movement developed. "Under certain circumstances," proclaimed the Berlin manifesto of 1918, "to be a Dadaist may mean to be more a businessman . . . than an artist—to be an artist only by accident."[43] Appropriately, Grosz told Richard Boyer that during World War I he liked to fool strangers at parties by pretending to be a businessman from Holland.[44] Even in these early drawings, then, we can discern Grosz's conflicted later response to the American culture industry prefigured in the simultaneous celebration of the material self-interest of the artist-as-gold-digger (another instance of Grosz's role-playing) and the emptying out of American frontier mythology into a homogenous and undifferentiated aesthetic landscape.

Before moving on to examine Grosz's arrival and early years in the United States, it is instructive to think about how these American scenes compare to the works produced by Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia during the same period. These two French artists, along with Man Ray, formed the core of the New York Dada movement between 1916 and 1921, and, while Grosz performed his virtual American exile, they experienced the nation materially through a series of transatlantic trips.[45] The principal developments that defined New York Dada were, in several respects, at some distance from the explosive collision of impulses evident in Grosz's drawings and photo collages. It was in New York that Duchamp abandoned painting in favor of a conceptual art that found expression in his great piece *Bride Stripped Bare By Her Batchelors, Even* (1915-23) and in the "readymades" most famously exemplified by *Fountain* (1917). Picabia's New York moment, meanwhile, is marked by the series of ascetic *portraits mécaniques* and his accompanying testimony that "almost immediately upon coming to America, it flashed upon me that the genius of the modern world is machinery."[46] Duchamp and Picabia may have been more formally experimental in their Dada practice, but their works exhibit a clear trajectory away from the social content of American culture toward a calculatedly cerebral, abstract and anti-humanist aesthetic, which, while embracing the United States' technological advances and techniques of mass production, excluded the violently antagonistic, libidinal energies traversing Grosz's pulp-inspired images.[47] The sin-

gle, glossy edition of the *New York Dada* magazine carried on its cover Man Ray's photograph of Duchamp's *Belle Haleine* (plate 1b), a readymade perfume bottle with the text "New York—Paris" inscribed on it. Such transnational impulses were always foregrounded in Dada, whether at its inaugural moment among the exiles assembled at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich or in Picabia's repeated (and ultimately failed) attempts to establish a vibrant and self-sufficient branch of the movement in the United States. In Grosz's pre-emigration works, however, the idea of America is disengaged from its geographic boundaries altogether, in order to function systematically as a language with which to present the West's crisis of modernity in the early twentieth century.

Interlude: Dada at the Movies, July 1932

Grosz arrived in New York for the first time on June 3, 1932, having been invited to teach at the Art Students League. He quickly made the decision to settle there permanently, returning the following year with his family and remaining in the United States for the following twenty-five years. This moment invites consideration as a convenient fault line in Grosz's career, marking decisively the break with the political and formal radicalism of Europe, and inaugurating a new period of assimilation to American popularism. Grosz himself presented his arrival in the United States in this way, as an almost miraculous event. McCloskey has provided a more measured account of a similar narrative, of his incremental disengagement from politically engaged art in the course of the 1920s, beginning with the disintegration of the Berlin Dada group, and then later his departure from the Communist Party.[48] During the early years in the States, by her account, Grosz resisted the overtures of the Popular Front in attempting "to reinvent himself and his art under completely changed circumstances."[49] The argument I am pursuing, however, is that such approaches have overlooked the sense in which American pulp culture, mass production, and popularism were always crucial components in Grosz's Dada practice, and that his emigration heralded not so much a sea change in his career as a shift or reconfiguration of that practice, as he adjusted to the shock of finally encountering the nation he had spent his life imagining. A fellow German émigré, Hans Sahl, argued that "even as an American, Grosz remained a Dadaist, reducing Yankeedom to absurdity by treating it with total seriousness while laughing his head off at it."[50] As we have already seen, this ambivalent and contradictory play with "Yankeedom" was inseparable from Grosz's Dada drawings during

World War I. What remains to be examined are the ways in which that play persisted beyond the point of his entry into the United States.

In order to do this, we need to consider Grosz's engagement with the evolving American culture industry, which had changed considerably since Wild West dime novels had provided his boyhood reading at the fin de siècle. Grosz's diaries record that in his first week in New York he went to see Paul Robeson's legendary performance in *Show Boat* on Broadway and admired Babe Ruth playing at Yankee Stadium, where his local team beat the Philadelphia Athletics handsomely. Within a few months, he had visited the cinema a number of times, seeing Harold Lloyd in *Movie Crazy*, Marlene Dietrich in *Blonde Venus*, Buster Keaton in *Speak Easily*, and the first ever feature-length zombie film, *White Zombie*.[51] From the letters he sent back to his wife, some of which were serialized in the magazine *Kunst und Künstler* later in 1932, we are able to reconstruct his conflicted response to a particular moviegoing experience, when he went to the Variety Palace on July 22.

> The movie we saw was great. Rudi Vallée sang beforehand, typical standard voice type one (to fall in love with: women are immediately entranced). Rudi is incorporated into the film like this: At first you just see shards of light, fragments which coalesce into an image of the "beautiful" Rudi (he really is) then he dances and sings . . . people were sobbing it was so moving but at the same time sugary, oversweet, as is often the case here. It seems appropriate over here but really means nothing—just drugstore art. Dostoevsky eat your heart out while Rudi sings![52]

Grosz understood Rudi Vallée's saccharine performances to be representative of American popular sentimentalism at its most vacuous, and yet he concedes not only Vallée's beauty but also his power to elicit visceral responses in his audience, in a kind of mirrored reversal of the physical revulsion he hoped to produce in the viewers of his Weimar-period *Lustmord* images.[53] The choice of Dostoevsky as correlative is interesting in the sense that Vallée is seen to compete with (and trump) one of the patron saints of the European modernist sensibility and, in doing so, indicate an unexpected sense in which Hollywood continued, as if in another dimension, the European modernist project by other means. In addition, it would be a mistake to understand Grosz's comments on Rudi Vallée—"it means nothing—just drugstore art"—as entirely negative. In the context of Dada, for an artwork to mean nothing and to present itself as disposable, while at the same time possessing the qualities of affect and accessibility, constitutes a success as

well as a failure. There is a glimpse in this performance by Vallée of the aesthetic and affective structures of the European avant-garde, rendered almost unrecognizable by the fact of their absolute institutionalization.

Unlike Vallée's performance, the feature film that Grosz watched that day can hardly be deemed representative of Golden Age Hollywood. *Freaks* was a controversial pre-Code melodrama set among a group of grotesque circus performers.[54] Its calculated taboo breaking—which included a passionate love affair between a dwarf and an acrobat, as well as the use of a real pair of Siamese twins as actors—ensured that genteel critics were outraged, and the film was generally unpopular in the United States until its revival as a cult "midnight movie" in the 1960s. Grosz remarked, "This film must have been dreamt up by a real creep," and catalogued some of its characters. "Throughout bizarre freaks—a seal man without arms lights his cigarette holding matches between his teeth. Strange dwarfs and Aztecs with small heads. Bizarre wedding celebration, Hieronymus Bosch or Breughel."[55] The interesting point here, as in his response to Rudi Vallée, is Grosz's compulsive turn to the European tradition as a point of comparison that renders the film at once familiar and strange. Bosch and Breughel were particularly important influences on Grosz's art. In a lecture he delivered at the Art Students League the following year, he spoke of how, immediately after World War I, he and Otto Dix turned to these two painters and "recognized masters who were related to us," in that they "searched for a fundamental contact with the people."[56] What is more, in his autobiography, Grosz describes how, "seen from America, it looked as if half Europe had reverted to one of those places depicted by Bosch or by Breughel in his *Victory of Death.*"[57] As in his pre-emigration period, Grosz found in his account of *Freaks* a way in which the American culture industry could speak a deterritorialized visual language with resonances that reached across the Atlantic to address the sociopolitical crises taking place there. This is not to flatten the difference between *Freaks* and the European tradition, however, for Grosz concludes his description thus: "The whole thing is a picture of hell, but subconsciously; hardly meant for educated Europeans."[58] Once again, we should not read this statement as wholly negative, for what impressed Grosz most of all about the culture industry he encountered in New York was its mass appeal, its ability to make the "fundamental contact with the people" he had sought in Germany after World War I. As with Rudi Vallée's performance, then, *Freaks* presents itself as a dissonant misrecognition of Grosz's European art, stripped of its self-conscious radicalism.

In turning to the B movies that followed the main feature, Grosz saw something more directly familiar to him from his exposure to the cowboy films shown in imperial Germany during his adolescence. "We then saw a couple of 'old' films going back 30 years. Funny. Indians lay siege to the farm house. The farmer's wife defends herself to the last cartridge. No help, the last cartridge on the table. What does the heroine do? Soon a Jewish-looking Indian breaks the door down. She sets a small baby on the colonial-style baby stool and fires the last shot at it. End! Everyone laughs."[59] As in the case of Rudi Vallée, the most striking impression for Grosz was not so much the aesthetic object as the visceral response it induced at the moment of consumption. He also seems intrigued by the perverse logic of response, according to which Vallée's cloying kitsch brings tears, while the shooting of a helpless child brings laughter. In his lectures to his students, Grosz characterized the Berlin Dada movement as "a horrible, ironic, decadent laughter—a terrible grinning despair—over the general failure of humanity."[60] There are, then, further parallels to be drawn between the anarchic nihilism that Grosz always placed at the center of his Dada practice and the ways in which popular cinema operated as he observed it in 1932. In classical Dada of the late teens and early twenties, the established relations between intention and reception were disrupted through the reconfiguring of aesthetic structures, whether through juxtaposition, as in the photomontage, or recontextualization, as in the readymade making its appearance within the sanctified space of the museum. As Richard Huelsenbeck put it, Dadas were "people who deliberately severed the process of communication, the causal nexus between payment and ware, between expectation and fulfillment, insecurity and affirmation."[61] What Grosz faced in his trip to the Variety Palace in New York, however, was unfamiliar insofar as it lacked this element of conscious intervention. Rather, the public anonymity of the movie theater facilitated the spontaneous and communal responses to artworks that the Dadas had always solicited.[62]

Wandering the streets during those first few weeks in New York, Grosz slipped into a kind of trance in which the visual language of the movies spilled out of the theater to inflect his own mode of seeing. "A piece of typical America. The men in shirtsleeves, braces, with fat cigars, slouching in leather armchairs, the raw melody of the language, the office, the half-lowered blinds, the universally glowing lights. Extraordinary. Like a film."[63] In a letter to his friend Otto Schmalhausen, he excitedly noted how figures he passed on the sidewalk resembled those he had seen in the movies, for

example, "a negro, as in grotesque films."[64] In the Art Students League, however, where he taught several times a week, Grosz intensified an argument he had first made in Germany in 1925, that cinema had taken the place of painting and drawing in fulfilling the demands of the masses.[65] In the United States, where cinema going had become the nation's dominant cultural activity, Grosz's argument gained greater momentum and recurred in his lectures. For instance, he claimed that "There is no doubt that the craving for pictures, which formerly was satisfied through paintings and drawings, is now almost exclusively satisfied by the mechanical apparatus, the camera. The public prefers to go to the movies to enjoy and satisfy there the existing healthy appetite for action and to see a picture with a happy ending."[66] These lectures from 1932 to 1935 provide a revealing insight into the formal difficulties that were to affect Grosz for the rest of his career and that came as a direct result of his transatlantic encounter with the culture industry. The fundamental problem was that he had arrived only to find that popular film and the culture industry more generally had already taken up a role that in various ways resembled that ostensibly desired by the avant-garde in Europe, overseeing the manic proliferation of images, giving expression to the irrational and somatic impulses of its working-class audiences, and providing a dreamworld in which fears and desires repressed in ordinary life could be articulated. "Look for [an] instant, at the movies and you are in the midst of imagination and dreams," he told his students.[67] However, by 1934, Grosz also feared that those dreams themselves had become little more than "cheap reflections of fairytales of a better and more comfortable life . . . fairytales for the masses."[68] In that year the advent of the Production Code Administration ensured that the type of scandalous, antiestablishment film Grosz enjoyed during his first years in the United States, such as *Freaks* and *Blonde Venus*, could no longer be made, marking a shift in Hollywood production toward less controversial genres, which, as he argued, propagated fairytales with happy endings, full of easy material and romantic wish-fulfillment.[69] This could only have reminded Grosz of the conservative "reform" movements in Germany, which had attempted to save German *Kultur* by censoring American dime novels before World War I and banning American films during it.[70] The enforcement of the Production Code is important in that it represented another sense in which America's projections of a unified self-identity could be seen to fracture under scrutiny, in this case through the intervention of the state within a cultural arena conventionally aligned with it. This maneuver, of course, is characteristic of New

Deal ideology in the way that its economic interventions compromised long-cherished ideals of self-reliance and rugged individualism. As we will see, such fissures opening up within the culture industry and American popular mythologies more generally are thrown into relief by much of Grosz's early 1930s work.

The movies, for better or for worse, had become what Grosz called "the really living gal[l]eries," and it should be recalled that Dada had always defined itself against the great bourgeois art institutions, the academies and museums, and desired to take art out into the street. (Grosz, incidentally, had been very impressed by the publicity for *Freaks*, which had a man inside a giant beetle suspended above the pavement outside the cinema, in an uncanny rehearsal of one of the old Dada "events.")[71] While several of his friends, such as the American screenwriter Ben Hecht and (later) Bertolt Brecht, had access to the audiences commanded by Hollywood, film was a medium that remained closed to Grosz, beyond the visit to the studios Hecht organized for him in 1934. At the same time, he was beginning to develop an increasingly antagonistic stance toward the American art establishment, represented by influential New York galleries such as MoMA and the Guggenheim, and in particular toward their affinity for European abstract painting. As experimental high modernists such as Matisse and Picasso became institutionalized in the American academy, Grosz turned to magazine illustration as a popular and accessible medium through which he could pursue his art. In these drawings we find not only a steadfast adherence to realist modes of representation but also a persistence of the same ambivalent engagement with transnationalism and American mass culture that we observed in his wartime drawings. Although these illustrations lack the raw, formally rebarbative belligerence of *Memory of New York* or *Golddiggers' Saloon*, they nevertheless demand to be understood within the same conceptual frame that Grosz had established in his earliest dealings with America, in which binary oppositions are constantly evoked only to be confounded and the culture industry itself becomes not simply an entity to be embraced or resisted but rather the necessary arena within which the complex dynamics of modernity are played out.

Individualism and Unhomeliness in the Great Depression

In his persistent interest in the American popular arts and skepticism about the New York art world's affinity for European abstract modernism, Grosz's views were broadly aligned with those expressed by Gilbert Seldes

a decade earlier in his influential book *The 7 Lively Arts* (1924). Seldes's radical defense of America's homegrown popular culture, such as slapstick movies, against the claims of "genteel" art was widely acclaimed and endorsed by figures such as Edmund Wilson and T. S. Eliot.[72] The principal argument, his denial of any "opposition between the great and the lively arts," is echoed by Grosz's comparisons of the movies he saw with the work of Dostoevsky and Breughel.[73] In addition, Seldes's rejection of Communism in the early 1930s, despite his instinctive leftist sympathies, can be compared to Grosz's split from the KPD (German Communist Party) in the mid-1920s. Appropriately, the two worked together on a short-lived magazine entitled *Americana*, which ran for eighteen issues in 1932–33 and also featured the work of Nathanael West, e. e. cummings, and S. J. Perelman. Grosz's contributions to *Americana* have been conspicuously absent from discussions of his work, perhaps because they so clearly contradict the received narrative of his desertion of Dada principles and unreserved conversion to the banalities of the American dream. Both he and Seldes signed an editorial statement in which they proclaimed that "we are Americans who believe that our civilization exudes a miasmic stench and that we had better prepare to give it a decent but rapid burial."[74] Such a declaration would hardly have been out of place in one of the magazines published by the Berlin Dadas fifteen years earlier. Like Dada, *Americana* aimed at consistent irreverence towards all institutions and authorities, whether aesthetic, political, or social, from Herbert Hoover to cubism.

If *Americana* provides an interesting transatlantic correlative to Berlin Dada, then the drawings Grosz published there are also suggestive of continuity, both in style and concern, between his World War I pieces and his American work. One drawing (figure 4) from the January 1933 issue, depicts a crowded urban street scene. Pedestrians of various genders and ethnicities, each apparently oblivious to the others, dominate the foreground, while a chaotic tangle of signs, cars, and buildings form the background. In terms of style, although the foreground bears close comparison to the observational sketches that were filling Grosz's notebooks at this time, the more crowded background, and especially the obtruding, lurching textual signs demanding our attention, recalls *Memory of New York*. Like that earlier drawing, this image seems to resist overt political interpretation. Read alongside Grosz's evocations of New York street scenes in his letters, it becomes clear that despite the realist bent of the observational style, this

drawing is still founded on Grosz's violent frontier dreams—the same ones he had long before his arrival in the United States.

> Everywhere groups of desperado-like men stand around looking nervous, by the dozen . . . All mixture of races. Half-gangsters, half-businessmen. What are they all talking about??? . . . A theatre, colorful, "for men only," in the foyer naked girls (photos) or in "Parisian costume" . . . stockings, furs, otherwise nothing . . . A crazy street with no conviviality, flowers or children. Old, original parts overwhelmed by the new. Like a nightmare city at the bottom of a sinister sea . . . repulsive but exciting. Gold digger atmosphere. This is still the clandestine world of adventurers and fortune hunters with their boundless striving. Something barbaric.[75]

The *Americana* street scene rehearses much of this content, including the female figures on the advertisement for the "men only" show, which divert the attention of a passerby in an analogue to the prostitute who overlooks the original gold diggers' saloon in the 1915 drawing. Viewed alongside the letters, it becomes clear that Grosz's drawing represents another attempt to bring American frontier mythologies directly into the metropolis, where rugged masculine individualism and acquisitiveness find their correlatives in the competitive market economy, among rapacious appetites for sex and for material goods.

"Repulsive but exciting," Grosz's vision of the consumerist cityscape is calculatedly contradictory in numerous ways. The particular tensions that I would like to draw attention to here, however, are those pertaining to individualism, a notion that became increasingly contested in the early years of the Great Depression. Grosz's long-held tendency to conflate the ideology of the early American frontier with early twentieth-century phenomena of mass production and technological advance coincided on his arrival in the United States with contemporary debates about the compatibility of these two seductive mythologies. In fact, in evoking the idea of the businessman-as-pioneer, Grosz was echoing the rhetoric expounded by the serving president, Herbert Hoover. In his book *American Individualism*, Hoover had explicitly evoked a lineage running from the earliest European settlers, through the frontier pioneers of the West, and into the great engineers of the nineteenth century. "The days of the pioneer are not over," he wrote at the crux of his argument that only a benevolent American capitalism could overcome the challenges presented by the modern industrialized state.[76] In the

Figure 4. George Grosz, Untitled ("Any Street, Any City, Any State, Anywhere"). Published in *Americana*, October 1932, 21. © Estate of George Grosz, Princeton, NJ/DACS 2015.

early 1930s, however, as the effects of the crash and ensuing depression began to manifest themselves, commentators such as John Dewey began to indicate the growing distance between traditional notions of rugged individualism and the reality of monopoly capitalism in the United States. While Hoover and his supporters opposed federal intervention in the economy on the grounds that it would compromise the individualism at the heart of an essential American identity, Dewey viewed such ideas as a "perversion of the whole idea of individualism to conform to the practices of a pecuniary culture."[77] Similarly, Stuart Chase wrote in 1932 of how "Laissez-faire rides well on covered wagons; not so well on conveyor belts and cement roads."[78] The necessity of providing a modern redefinition of American individualism

as in some sense compatible with the public interest became the conundrum at the centre of New Deal policy.

As Martin Rubin has argued in his reading of Depression-era cinema, the political objectives of the New Deal and the aesthetic ones of many leftist artists coincided in their shared desire that "the needs of private and public, individual and mass, would naturally merge and reflect each other."[79] From this perspective, Grosz's *Americana* sketches are intriguingly resistant to such optimistic resolution. The one we have been discussing is representative of Grosz's early American work in its depiction of an abrasive street scene in which, despite their proximity, individuals refuse recognition of those sharing the public space (his typical compositional structure in street sketches from this period juxtaposes bodies facing in opposite directions). As self-interested gold diggers, Grosz's figures are both part of the crowd and resolutely unamenable to collective identity, a paradox that is left deliberately unresolved. In the context of the early Depression, then, Grosz's art, far from assimilating itself to a syrupy set of American ideals, continued the work of his German period in unmasking the ideological orthodoxies offered by established authority and aiming, as he had put it in 1931, to "show the people the secret devil's face."[80] At stake here is a conscious rejection of the comforts offered by dialectical resolution, and in its place is a modernist dedication to the aesthetic value of dissonance. In this, Grosz followed one of the founders of Dada, Tristan Tzara. "There is no ultimate Truth. Dialectics is an amusing machine that leads us (in banal fashion) to the opinions we would have held in any case."[81]

We pursue the larger question of Dadaism and dialectics later in this chapter, but for the moment I want to return to another set of contradictions related to the individualism debate—that between a homogenized US mass culture and attempts made during the early 1930s to construct a domestic vision of the nation as a variegated yet united territory given strength through its cultural diversity. This was the decade marked by what Warren Susman later termed "the domestication of culture," characterized by the anthropological turn in thinking about American culture and evident in works such as Constance Rourke's *American Humor* (1931) and the *Middletown* studies of Robert and Helen Lynd (1929, 1937).[82] Concomitant to this, the early 1930s also saw the development of a regionalist aesthetic among painters such as Thomas Hart Benton, Grosz's colleague at the Art Students League. As Erika Doss has argued, regionalism, despite its apparent emphasis on the particularities of the local, played an important role in the estab-

lishment of a distinctively nativist national culture, defining its homely, realist style against the incursions of European formalism. "Regionalism's lure of the local was used as the currency of cultural nationalism: while seemingly focused on specific Midwestern places, Regionalism embodied the larger cultural project of blending America's multiple 'locals' into a national picture of unity."[83] While Grosz later became associated with the regionalists largely because of his friendship with Benton and their shared antipathy to modernist abstraction, it is important to recognize how, in his early American work, Grosz systematically ironized and undermined the ideological assumptions underpinning the movement. The satirical heading above the street sketch when published was "See America First," which directs us to the promotion of domestic tourism. The tourism industry had gathered momentum from the mid-1920s onward under the direction of the National Park Service, and it exhorted Americans "to imbibe the spirit or essence of America and rekindle their sense of patriotism."[84] As Marguerite Shaffer shows in her study of tourism and national identity, touring was promoted as "an extension of America's heroic pioneer past."[85] Posters bearing the slogan "See America First" would typically show stylized images of the National Parks of the West, rather than, as in Grosz's drawing, the chaos of Main Street. The caption underneath the drawing sharpens our sense of Grosz's satirical intentions. The words, "Any street, any city, any state, anywhere," remind us once again that the excitement and energy of the American culture of mass consumption is constantly offset in his art by its monotony and inability to acknowledge difference. The cost of bringing pioneer individualism into the city is, paradoxically, that the city itself loses its individuality.

The effect of the street sketch, as of *Americana* more generally, was to unsettle deliberately the categories around which the developing idea of the nation was becoming established, by adopting the ideological strategies of boosterism and then driving them beyond their political limits. Like the regionalists, then, Grosz works here with the principle of synecdoche, whereby any part of the United States can be understood to allegorize itself as an embodiment of national impulses. As a slogan promoting national identity, "See America First" can hardly be questioned. As we can see, however, in the choice of an aggressively homogenizing consumer culture rather than, say, Grant Wood's preferred images of green hills in Iowa, Grosz constructs an aesthetic of *unhomeliness*. I use this translation of the German *unheimlich* rather than the more conventional "uncanny" deliberately in

order to evoke the way in which Grosz's engagement with the United States not only involved a grappling with the interplay of sameness and difference, and of recognition and defamiliarization, but also was more systematically directed against the idea of the domestic itself as it was appropriated for nationalist politics. In Grosz's life this was done first by the self-appointed guardians of German *Kultur* during the death throes of the Second Reich and then by the American artists, intellectuals, and politicians seeking to define, contain, and promote the idea of an "indigenous" American culture in the 1930s. There is a neat progression to be observed in the way Grosz first used America in revolt against a monolithic German culture and then, after arrival, turned the same images of mass consumerism and frontier mythology against comparable nationalist impulses in the United States. According to this perspective, the popular German *Heimatroman*, or regionalist novel, which appeased petit-bourgeois insecurities about industrialization at the beginning of the twentieth century by constructing versions of a precapitalist idyll, was undomesticated by Grosz's evocations of a transnational *Americanismus* that belligerently staged the return of repressed fears of modernity.[86] By contrast, the interwar American correlative to the *Heimatroman*—the regionalist movement—was rendered *unheimlich* by his insistent reproduction of the homogenous urban cityscape across the nation and beyond.

In a 1949 letter, Grosz named Freud as one of the most important intellectual influences on his work, and indeed it seems possible that Freud's essay on the *unheimlich* may have had a direct impact on Grosz's art.[87] Freud discusses there the disturbing effects that the perceptions of automatons have on the human mind, an observation illustrated by Grosz's obsessive depiction of automatons as doubles for himself and his acquaintances during the 1920s. My chief argument, however, is that the *unheimlich* as unhomeliness manifests itself in his art at a more foundational level, consistent with his Dada practice. This is evident in the slippage between recognition and misrecognition that tends to characterize his work. We have already seen how, for instance, in his World War I drawings, the familiar scene of a Berlin café is eerily reconfigured through its repetition as a lawless Wild West saloon. In his essay, Freud locates the essence of the *unheimlich* in the ease with which it transforms into its opposite, so as to simultaneously evoke seduction and repulsion, the familiar and the strange. In addition, he draws on Schelling's understanding of *unheimlich* as the name for "everything that ought to have remained secret and hidden, but has come to light."[88] While Freud and many of his readers have followed such insights

into the interior realms of psychoanalysis, in Grosz's case this process of unwelcome revelation, or, as he put it, "show[ing] the people the devil's secret face," takes on a political valence in which the conventionally settled categories of national boundaries and the comforting familiarity of domestic cultures are rediscovered in insidious, hostile aspects.[89]

These unhomely elements in Grosz's work are made explicit in a series of watercolors depicting New York that he published in *Vanity Fair* in 1934. Like the *Americana* work, these have not been given attention in the critical literature on Grosz. Once again, we may surmise that this is because these paintings are not easily assimilated into the standard narratives, either of Grosz's love affair with America and its popular culture, or of his darker historically themed canvases of the later thirties and forties. At this point, about eighteen months after the *Americana* drawing we have been discussing, the artist returned to explore the transnational theme that had so often marked his engagement with the United States. The copy that accompanied the paintings was titled "Chameleon City: An Artist Tours the World, without Leaving Manhattan," and went on to outline the conceptual basis for the collection: "Know the life of New York and you know the life of Paris, London, Havana, Canton and all the great capitals; for, more and more, New York is becoming the world's metropolis. Within its borders can be found every passion, fashion, race, vice, trade, taste and mania. It is the earth's most versatile city, a chameleon, a kaleidoscope; in proof of which we offer these ten colorful impressions by George Grosz, who shows that if we only walk around Manhattan, we can literally 'observe mankind, from China to Peru.'"[90] Each of the ten paintings takes on a geographical doubling in its caption. "Broadway, or the Place Pigalle, Paris" (plate 2) gives us a sea of grotesque figures and faces crowding before glowing neon signs. Since Pigalle was primarily known as a red-light district of Paris, this is another example of American consumerism (mis)recognized as prostitution, and as in the *Americana* drawing, the street signs compete with the female form for the attention of the male gaze. Similarly, another painting printed in the group, "East 115th Street—or Naples," depicts a swarthy inhabitant of Italian Harlem admiring the passing figure of a young woman while the bright colors of the barber's pole behind him go almost unnoticed. Both images reinforce for us the way in which the United States, in Grosz's art, functions not so much as a geographical space but as an ideological one in which the market dominates every aspect of life, including aesthetics. Later, in his autobiography, he compared his arrival in New York to entry into a fair-

ground. "You have come to a gigantic fairground so make your booth as attractive as possible."[91] The America we find in Grosz's paintings is one in which the constant manufacture and interplay of desire—whether through sexuality or through advertising—is the animating principle.

But what of Grosz's own fairground booth? In choosing this particular metaphor, the artist explicitly signals his own complicity in the operation of the market he depicts. We should remember that Grosz later claimed that his earliest ambition in the United States was to become a popular illustrator. The artists he claimed to envy and wish to emulate included Charles Dana Gibson, creator of the famous "Gibson girl," which established a paradigm for female beauty exploited in advertising and various merchandise throughout early twentieth-century America; and Floyd MacMillan Davis, who was in the 1930s probably the nation's leading figure in advertising and magazine illustration.[92] Grosz's diaries also indicate that in 1934 he received $500 from the J. Walter Thompson agency for illustrating a Coca-Cola advertisement.[93] It is clear, in other words, that Grosz aspired to and in a limited capacity succeeded in integrating his own practice into the world of commercial advertising. In this way, he was participating in a trend that saw a number of American modernists in the 1920s, from Georgia O'Keefe to Charles Demuth, offer their services to the American advertising industry. The key difference to note, however, is that while such figures began to introduce abstract or futurist motifs into the mainstream of American commercial aesthetics, the kind of illustration that attracted Grosz belonged to an older tradition of popular realism, which operated within the strict boundaries of American nostalgia.[94] He never broke into the world of popular illustration and never published in the *Saturday Evening Post* alongside his hero Norman Rockwell or in any other of the middlebrow magazines he professed to admire. Once again, we find that his stance toward American popular culture in his own work remains profoundly ambivalent. Although he admitted that many popular illustrators "were banal or tended to prettify," he still "preferred their saccharine quality to those outpourings of acid, of bogus colours and forms that paraded under the label of modern art."[95] When Grosz came to emulate his idols, though, "somehow, I seemed quite unable to acquire the simplicity and normality of the American illustrators I most admired, for everything seemed to run away with me, especially when I worked with watercolours."[96]

This last comment speaks to us directly as we contemplate the *Vanity Fair* illustrations and in particular "Broadway—or the Place Pigalle, Paris,"

where the colors are allowed to run and bleed spectacularly. It is this bleeding that gives the image its unhomely quality and transforms the bright colors more typically associated with positive, popular images of Broadway into something altogether more sinister. Once again, we should note how Grosz adopts the conventions of popularist aesthetics and drives them beyond their comfortable limits so as to threaten their intended purpose, a form of what Timothy Bewes has called "homeopathic diagnosis," in which the tools of the existing order are appropriated "in the service of the eradication of that order."[97] The artificial light descending onto the figures in the foreground is also that which reveals their grotesquely lascivious expressions, caught halfway between grin and grimace. The neon colors that are designed to elicit desire are seen to be powerfully effective at the same time as yielding up their opposite meaning as ugliness and repulsion. Broadway had long been a symbol of American consumerism, but in the late 1920s it had evolved from the bright white commercial lighting that had earned it the title of "Great White Way" and transformed its billboards into the riot of neon colors we observe in the watercolor.[98] Grosz described his impressions of it to his wife in an early letter, in which he remarks on the billboards filling up every space, "lit up even during the day."[99] Even while its symbolic function gestures toward the enduring of American consumerism in the midst of the Great Depression, however, the title's allusion to Paris's red-light district robs the United States of its triumphalist self-recognition and introduces a jarring transatlantic dissonance into the rhetoric of boosterism.

The Avant-Garde on Sale: Complicity, Critique, and the Market

In the light of Grosz's persistent unhomeliness during the first two years of his American life, it is clear that his claims in *A Small Yes and a Big No* to have wholeheartedly embraced America's popular aesthetics and its consumer ethic on arrival cannot be taken at face value. In itself, this is hardly a radical revision. Such claims were implausible from the very start, and the autobiography demands acknowledgement as yet another performed role among many. More interesting, I think, is the emerging pattern of interplay and transection across categories of nation and culture, which always returns to confound critical attempts at locating and defining Grosz's work as European or American, oppositional avant-gardism or capitulation to kitschy popularism. In this context, Stephen C. Foster's comments on the premises of avant-garde criticism and scholarship are apposite, inviting us

to think about Dada as a way of coping with radical and disorienting shifts in social experience rather than as a utopian, reformist movement. For Foster, "there may be more to learn from the processes of their coping than from the *products* of their coping."[100] In this sense, it is a mistake to judge Grosz's American work by the standards set up by the European or even vice versa. Rather, we need to understand how Grosz negotiated the particular cultural field in which he found himself. As we will now see, this involved his attempts to find a role for himself within the wider context of the artistic marketplace.

Although Grosz sought publication in a number of middlebrow magazines during his first years in the United States, it was not the case that he simply discarded his past in order to present himself in the same category as Floyd Davis or Harold von Schmidt. Rather, Grosz's aim was to draw on his European reputation for satire and cultural critique while reaching the wide readership commanded by *Esquire*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and other "slicks." In 1936, for example, we find him writing to his close friend Ben Hecht, asking him to use his influence to help get him published in *Esquire*.

> What I'm going to ask you about is this, can't you write to the *Esquire* a few lines telling them that you like their idea to bring out a man like me and maybe urging them to bring more from me and in bigger reproductions [. . .] and furthermore tell him that even his erotic and sweet-cynical would look thru contrast so, would look even more nice and sweetish . . . and he from time to time contrasts it with a serious drawing of mine . . . (he may prove that slogan: where there is or are sinners there is always a preacher on hand . . . in this case me, Benny, got me?)[101]

In this example, Grosz's typical impulse toward simultaneous affirmation and negation for American popular culture is altered in its terms if not its essential structure. The vision of middlebrow magazine publishing offered here is a classically dialogic one in which sin and preacher exist in a relationship of mutual benefit and codependence. We should not forget how Grosz's own articulation of this vision is also a cynical one, in which the saccharine eroticism of the popular illustrations is itself exploited in turn by the "serious" artist, who, while critiquing it, serves to increase its allure.

"How can I compete with those sweet and clever American illustrators?" Grosz asked Hecht in the same letter. "And wouldn't I lose my face too? No, that's not my way, then better wait . . . as they say until my ship comes in, Benny." As we can see, then, Grosz's aesthetic decision making at this point

was in large part dictated by the American market. The Grosz brand carried with it expectations of biting satire and a certain kudos derived from his European origins and, in particular, his participation in the European avant-garde. In spite of his increasingly polemical attacks on the institutionalization of European modernism in the United States, Grosz was understood by the American art establishment to be betraying his European high-cultural roots if he strayed too far into the American scene. Reviewing an exhibition of Grosz's New York watercolors (of the same group as those published in *Vanity Fair*), J. C. Bulliet wrote in the *Chicago Daily News* that "there is not enough tonic in the "American Scene" to keep this powerful satirist toned up to the pitch that made him the gadfly to both Kaiser Wilhelm and President Von Hindenburg . . . It is only when he becomes consciously 'American' that he slips. No one wants Hauptmann to write an American novel nor Pirandello to write an American play. Why not let Grosz continue to go his mighty pictorial ways as a German?"[102] While reviews routinely associated Grosz with futurism, surrealism, and cubism, it seemed clear that Grosz should make some attempt to realize his own cultural capital by selling himself as a European avant-gardist and attempting to find a place for himself in the developing market for modernist art among the middle classes.[103] This is reflected in his direct appeal to Arnold Gingrich, editor at *Esquire*, to publish some of his photomontages, a technique Grosz had pioneered with his fellow Dadas in Berlin in the late 1910s. This letter reveals much about how Grosz understood the continuing role of Dada in his American work and in the American marketplace.

> I have to offer you a new kind of idea, you'll see for yourself. As I was formerly a specialist in photomontage . . . and as I know this special method here in America is almost not used for making illustrations, I send you two of my most recent works using that medium. Two weird and sinister photomontages. So you can judge for yourself. Maybe you try one out . . . to see the result. I can do a great deal in that medium. If you are not interested then send them back . . . but I think it would add quite some new sensation to *Esquire.* And I think it may open a new way of illustration anyhow. There is really no magazine today which is using this nearly forgotten photomontage.[104]

The idea of montage being both forgotten and new strikes at the heart of the American art establishment as it developed during the late 1930s and early 1940s through the reputation of New York's Museum of Modern Art, which championed the European avant-gardes of Dada, cubism, abstrac-

tion, and surrealism under the banner of the modern and the new just as those movements began to falter under increasing political pressure in Europe. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that Grosz tried to sell his photomontage in 1936, the same year that MoMA carried a controversial major exhibition entitled *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, which attracted fifty thousand visitors in its first eight weeks. (The organizer of the exhibition, Alfred H. Barr, had written to Grosz for help and advice in May 1936.)[105] *Esquire* did not publish Grosz's photomontages, although they did commission a number of black and white illustrations for their stories and essays between 1936 and 1939, work with which he ultimately became dissatisfied. Ironically, he was later to criticize the magazine for making precisely the same demands for innovation that he had solicited in his letter, accusing it of being "like a fashion house: it has a constant need for new ideas—or for old ideas dressed up as new—which are used, then quickly discarded."[106] This rhetoric of novelty was to become the target of Grosz's attacks on modernism, and yet we have seen that he was ready to adopt it when necessary.

Grosz was being disingenuous in claiming that "there is really no other American magazine which uses this . . . photomontage" because he had sold several to *Vanity Fair* in 1934; they were printed in the same issue in which the New York watercolors appeared. These two pieces, entitled *Crime Doesn't Pay* (figure 5) and *American Landscape*, return explicitly to the idea of America and its mass culture. *American Landscape* was adapted from *Keep Smiling*, a photomontage dating back to the early Dada period, while *Crime Doesn't Pay* was created just after the move to the United States. In either case, these two photomontages provide a bridge between Grosz's Dada phase and his artistic identity in the United States in the 1930s. This should come as no surprise, since photomontage, even when first used in Berlin during and just after World War I, was in a strong sense always directed at the United States. As various cultural historians have related, photomontage developed partly in response to the perceived Americanization of German culture—the increased popularity of the cinema and rise of illustrated newspapers such as *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung*.[107] Insofar as photomontage adopted its fundamental technique of juxtaposing various images and text from new media, and yet at the same time radically challenged such media's claims to representational authenticity by discomposing the intended relations between their components, the form contained an inherent ambivalence of the type we have been observing elsewhere in Grosz's oeuvre.

Figure 5. George Grosz, *Crime Doesn't Pay—The Case of the Own Club*, 1932. Collage, partly worked over in colors, 21 1/3 × 17 1/3 in. Private Collection. © Estate of George Grosz, Princeton, NJ/DACS 2015.

The concerns of *Crime Doesn't Pay* are by now well familiar to us, even if we have not yet addressed the photomontage form. Grosz's childhood obsessions with American violence, power, and coercion, filtered through the consumption of dime novels and movies, is given prominence. The accomplishment of the work is its exploration of the contradictions lurking within the propagation of American mythologies through popular culture. The frontier mythology of individualist freedom that Grosz had internalized so early in his life is subject to critique by the imagery of incarceration that dominates the work. The confined contents of the criminal's mind forces two images—of a revealed female thigh and of a prison block—into an uneasy encounter between desire and confinement. This combination is then

subsumed at the next visual level by the inevitable presence of the law, signified metonymically by the police baton and handcuffs. The same structure is replicated in the relationship between the consumer and the artwork, in which the desire for violent sensationalism is gratified while the consumer is, in turn, subjected to control by the higher laws of the culture industry. This inevitability of submission to the law is, of course, repeated in the title of the work, but *Crime Doesn't Pay* also reminds us that there are those at the top of the culture industry for whom crime did pay, and handsomely so. The period 1930 to 1932 saw the first cycle of American gangster films, including *Little Caesar* (1930), *The Public Enemy* (1931), and *Scarface* (1932). As *Variety* magazine testified at the time, "taken all in all, the gang cycle has been more productive commercially than any other so-called cycle in years."[108] Grosz's love of American screen violence went back to the Wild West films of his youth, but *Scarface* in particular would have attracted his attention because the screenplay was written by his friend Ben Hecht. *Scarface* was the object of a vitriolic protest campaign because it seemed to exemplify a perceived tendency within the culture industry to exploit the sensationalism offered by the genre (glamorizing violence and the gangster lifestyle), while at the same time claiming to condemn the same. Defenders of the genre made the argument that since screen gangsters always received justice by the end of the picture, it was nonsense to suggest that such films should be censored as serving the cause of organized crime. As Will Hays, president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, explained, "crime does not pay" was the message offered by films such as *Scarface*: "Success of self-regulation is shown on many screens in the words: 'Crime does not pay.' "[109] We can see, then, that the structure of Grosz's own complicity with mass culture knowingly rehearses the culture industry's tendency to combine hypocritical moralism with a willingness to exploit sensationalism for financial gain.

Unsolvable Propositions, or How to be a Dadaist in Postwar America

The memoirs of Richard Huelsenbeck, Grosz's one-time collaborator on the Berlin Dada scene and a fellow émigré to the United States, provide an interesting route into the final question I want to pose in this chapter: How can one be a Dadaist in Cold War America? Huelsenbeck wrote a short essay in 1969 entitled "On Leaving America for Good," in which he meditated on his decision to leave for Switzerland after thirty-three prosperous years

spent in the United States as a psychotherapist. The reasons he gave were mostly to do with the fundamental incompatibility he saw between the contradictory spirit of Dada, to which he still held an allegiance, and the cultural currents dominating American life. "To be clear," he wrote, "there is no dada conflict in America, while there is such a thing in Europe, or at least there was until recently."[110] Huelsenbeck's attempts to explain and promote in the United States his own understanding of Dada, which he described as "a form of humanism . . . a fight for the freedom and the rights of the individual," had fallen on deaf ears in a nation where he felt everyone already believed they were free. "During my last years in the States," he went on, "in spite of all my love for American ideals and for American reality, I became sick of my growing success and orderliness. I was in danger of becoming one of those handshaking 'How are you?' and 'How do you do?' types that I hate so much. I wanted to be a hippie again, a Dadaist hippie in my own style with short hair and with a good fitting suit – but a hippie anyway." Huelsenbeck admitted that his move to Switzerland was hardly likely to provide a resolution to the tensions he was articulating, between his Dadaist impulses and his desire to be a respectable doctor. "Here, gentlemen, is my conflict. Being unable to solve it entirely, I try to solve it by changing scenes. It is a mistake" (188). I want to suggest, however, that the maneuver he sketches in this essay, of displacing the aesthetic dilemmas arising from the relationship between the theory and praxis of Dadaism onto questions of domesticity and nation, is a mistake made also by those who would understand Grosz's American migration as the defining fault line in his career. Whether they follow the more conventional route of viewing his American work through the lens of tragic failure (as did Huelsenbeck), or whether they attempt some form of critical rehabilitation, such perspectives obscure the more important issue of Grosz's perverse strategies for self-positioning within an evolving, transnational cultural field, in such a way as to constantly expose and confound its governing rules from within. This is not to say that the move to America isn't deserving of our attention. On the contrary, what I have been arguing in this chapter is that Grosz's engagement with the United States before and after his emigration throws into relief a set of contradictory roles and practices that he kept in play throughout his career, albeit at a personal cost measured in alcoholism and depression. Grosz's Dadaism was, in a deliberately principled sense, never "at home" with itself or with his nation, and this axiom held true whether he was posing as a businessman from Holland, drawing cowboy saloons in Berlin dur-

ing World War I, or as an exiled avant-gardist, playing the role of conformist suburbanite and championing Norman Rockwell in the heyday of modernist abstraction in America.

Huelsenbeck persisted, in bad faith, with the fantasy that the historical avant-garde could somehow retain an authentically radical position in the reconfigured cultural field centered in New York after World War II, arguing that "the contemporary artist's best chance to fulfill his mission is abstract art" (89). Grosz's work, on the other hand, from his dreamily romantic oil landscapes of Cape Cod to his angrily nihilist "Stick Man" drawings in ink, and the commission he undertook of painting Dallas for a department store owner in 1952, testify to his steadfast resistance to the increasing prestige of abstraction in the academy, as well as to a disastrously improvised incoherence in his oeuvre.[111] Grosz's strategy for being a Dadaist in postwar America was, as in Peter Bürger's well-known formulation, a negation not of aesthetic styles but of aesthetic institutions, along with their associated demands for a coherent artistic project.[112] In other words, in his American oeuvre much of the violence evident in his earlier art is not so much repressed or resolved as *displaced* from within the work to the world of its circulation and reception. The Dada moment of the late 1910s had become safely historicized by the late 1940s and early 1950s, smoothly assimilated into the narratives proposed by the postwar artistic establishment, which we discuss further in chapter 5. During this time, Huelsenbeck and others began to publish competing accounts of its mythological origins, while Robert Motherwell, one of the leading abstract expressionists, gathered together his landmark 1951 anthology of Dada writing in English, an anthology that more or less excluded Grosz, who was criticized for his perceived betrayal: "Grosz's work leaves us indifferent and bears no relation to the force that has taken hold of us."[113] Grosz, meanwhile, effectively took the view that the best way to remain a Dadaist was to renounce historical Dada, preferring to occupy compromised positions within discredited middlebrow institutions, such as the Associated American Artists, and writing with increasing fervor a series of attacks on the institutionalization of modernism in New York.[114] These had evolved from the bemused skepticism he expressed on first arrival into outright hostility, proclaiming, for example, that "the art criticism of today is full of bloated highfalutin talk," that modernism had become "already very academic and a stale *manière*," and that abstract expressionism seemed "almost like the meeting place of a sacred (humorless) secret sect."[115] From this perspective we can see how Grosz's Ameri-

can career represents European modernism's angry refusal to be legitimized as high culture.

This deliberately untimely self-positioning within the cultural field is the context in which Grosz made a sudden turn back to photomontage in the late 1950s, returning perversely to the very techniques he had done his best to distance himself from for the previous twenty years. He wrote to his wife, "I'm doing about 40 montages (like Matisse in his old age), not bad; it's great fun—and it's funny, I did this sort of thing 60 years ago."[116] Sixty years previously, Grosz had been a five-year-old boy. This curiously elliptical statement, in his usual manner, uncomfortably juxtaposes a set of binaries between childhood and old age and, implicitly, between Dada's revolutionary timeliness—when his first photomontages depicted the cut-out images of American magazines imported to Germany by his brother-in-law—and its now-reified reputation in the postwar. The collages are self-consciously anachronistic but also oddly prophetic, anticipating by several years the development of 1960s pop art in their deployment of kitsch and pulp found images. On several levels, then, they are untimely, shuttling between childhood and old age, too late or too early to reconcile themselves to the present.

In their untimeliness, the collages recall the fragmentary theorizations of Adorno in his writings on Beethoven's *Spätstil* and, in particular, the description of how late artists "fall back on something from the past as a sacrifice to the future," forming a critique of the oeuvre as both incomplete and incompletable. In Adorno's formulation, the distinctive aesthetic maneuver of late style is an irascible refusal of aesthetic synthesis, which "turns the impossibility of aesthetic harmony into aesthetic content," a process of evacuating subjectivity from the work, leaving it to display its own vacated form or, in his words, "turn its emptiness outwards."[117] This is not the moment to embark on a torturous Adornian reading of Grosz's late works, but I do want to emphasize how these photomontages represent neither a triumphant return to Dada technique (the "late flowering" of critical cliché) nor a desperate grasping at a redundant form. Rather, there is something far more calculated about the way these images resume and interrogate Grosz's lifelong relationship to American popular forms in the light of the emergence of a fully fledged, homogenous mass culture in the 1950s.

Comparing the late collages to Grosz's earlier American-inspired drawings and photomontages, it becomes evident that the late works clear away much of the energy generated through the interaction between multiple images arranged as a constellation across space. In the earlier work, the rest-

Figure 6. George Grosz, *Female Portrait with Cut-out Eyes and Mouth*, 1957. Collage on thin cardboard, 14 × 8 in. Collection of Douglas Gordon, Berlin. © Estate of George Grosz, Princeton, NJ/DACS 2015.

less impulses toward desire and disgust remain constantly in play, switching alternately between the negative and the positive, thereby giving expression to the exhilarating if destructive contradictions of American modernity. In the later photomontages, by contrast, such libidinal investments are renounced, and attention is directed to a single figure lifted from a glossy magazine and defaced, either through the substitution of body parts or, in several cases, the erasure of facial features. While these works resume many of the *unheimlich* qualities of earlier drawings and paintings, they do so through a pointed hollowing of mass cultural iconography image by image and thus systematically close off any opportunities for the play of desire. Works such as *Female Portrait with Cut-out Eyes and Mouth* (figure 6) literalize Adorno's vision of the artwork "turn[ing] its emptiness outward," in order to exhibit an impasse in Dada's relationship to the culture industry it had always depended on. In this way, the collages articulate the logic behind their own formal redundancy. We are reminded of Huelsenbeck's comment in the late 1960s: "There is no dada conflict in America."

The work entitled *Myself and New York* (plate 3) emerges as a coda for Grosz's entire career, returning for the last time to the motif of New York's skyline, which had animated his work before and after emigration. In this piece, rather than obliterating the face of the central figure as he does in other collages from the series, Grosz imposes the face of a clown over that of the dancing girl and gives the androgynous composite a bottle of Four Roses whiskey, in reference to his own undisguised alcoholism. The satirist's gaze is turned reflexively upon himself, and Grosz becomes the American mass entertainer he had consistently claimed that he aspired to be, the Yankee from Berlin. As a fantasy of wish fulfillment, though, *Myself and New York* holds little comfort. The strange violence of his earlier cityscapes is substituted by the cut-out cliché of the skyscrapers at night, and the dancing clown who presides drunk over her/his own obsolescence discloses a helpless submission to this homogenous power. The clown performs not only for the viewer of the image but also for the phallic skyscrapers towering behind. If, in his earlier works, Grosz had often represented American commodity culture using the female sexual object, rendered simultaneously grotesque and desired, then here he comes to occupy that very position himself, as in Walter Benjamin's vision of the prostitute as symbol of capitalism, "seller and commodity in one."[118]

Grosz died in 1959 and thus missed the rise of pop art, which legitimated the techniques he had experimented with in his late collages. He had been an émigré for twenty-six years but, as we have seen, an American artist for much longer. The way in which the American part of Grosz's career made of failure a perverse form of success registers for us a continuation of Dadaism from beyond its own historical limit. We have consequently been able to consider how Dadaism, in Foster's sense of "a way of coping," did not so much die as adapt itself to the dramatic shifts in the cultural field after the demise of European modernism in the interwar period. By analyzing Grosz's career on both sides of the Atlantic, we have been able to think dialectically about Dadaism, despite Tzara's criticism of the dialectic as a banality. Grosz's art has emerged as profoundly and consistently dialectic, but in a sense that should be distinguished from the critique launched by the founding Dadas, which was aimed more at the optimistic left-Hegelianism that endorsed historical teleology through the intercession of *Weltgeist* in a series of progressive syntheses. Hugo Ball wrote during World War I of how, "according to Hegel, the Germans are the embodiment of the spirit of the world. (Scarcely a hundred years went by before everyone was laughing at that.)"[119] Dada

may have been in part directed against such crude ameliorative Hegelianism, and the refusals of resolution we have witnessed at various levels in Grosz's career can be understood in this fashion. A different dialectic structure can be recognized, nonetheless, in the tendency of his work to unmask the categories of cultural stratification and of national identity as reversible and thus to prompt their reconceptualization at a more sophisticated level, which must take account of their function within broader systems of institutional power.

3 The Big Empty
Raymond Chandler's Transatlantic Modernism

We begin with the great paradox of Raymond Chandler's career, which is often noted in passing but rarely examined closely. The most famous practitioner of that typically American art form, hardboiled detective fiction, thought of himself as a British exile. "Incidentally, I still regard myself as an exile, and want to come back," he told his British publisher Hamish Hamilton in 1946, and he later described himself as "half British" to his friend James Sandoe.[1] Although born in Chicago, Chandler spent the years 1895 to 1912, when he was between the ages of seven and twenty-four, living in South London, first as a schoolboy, then a civil servant, and, finally, an essayist, reviewer, and execrable poet, on the fringes of the late Edwardian and early Georgian literary scene. As he often reminded his friends and correspondents, he was also a product of the British public-school system, having attended Dulwich College. "One of the larger English Public Schools," he explained to his US publisher Blanche Knopf in 1940, "not ranking with Eton, Harrow, Charterhouse or Marlborough, but certainly ranking ahead many of those which *Life* made a fuss over in its last issue" (*SL*, 15). *Life* had run a short piece on the elite boarding schools in an issue dedicated to "the English" as Britain began its first major combat operations of World War II. Portraying a strange and distant country divided by class and eccentric customs, *Life* described England's greatest contributions to civilization as "free speech and tea."[2] Chandler noted their inability to differentiate between a School Tie and an Old School Tie.[3] Though he had dwelt in Southern California since 1912, he counted himself an expert in such matters. His own notions of Englishness, however, went beyond the stereotypes offered by the popular American press during the war. Chandler's England, never fully dissociated from his public-school days, was a nation of cultural and educa-

tional tradition, ethical virtue, and refined taste. He dreamed of returning there from at least 1932, when he wrote a romantic poem eulogizing "the England I picture in the night hours / Of this bright and dismal land / Of my exile and dismay."[4] Only after the death of his wife in 1955 was he able to fulfill this desire, and he spent much of his remaining life in London, albeit often disillusioned with the cultural decline he discovered there.

How are we to reconcile Chandler's Anglophilia with his legacy in American popular culture and literary history? Understood as one of the key figures in the development of the hardboiled detective school, Chandler's reputation rests largely upon his US vernacular prose style.[5] He made no secret of his apprenticeship as a pulp writer in the early to mid-1930s, when he was inspired by the vernacular styles of Ernest Hemingway and Dashiell Hammett. (His surviving notebooks contain exercises in imitation of Hemingway, "the greatest living American novelist."[6]) "My fiction was learned in a rough school," he told Knopf, in marked contrast to his English public-school education.[7] Hardboiled crime fiction, like the dime-novel Westerns from which it evolved, is popularly supposed to be a native genre that evolved organically from the American literary and cultural environment.[8] For some literary historians, hardboiled fiction and the films noirs that adapted its aesthetic for the screen constitute America's own "pulp modernism," rivaling the modernism of the European canon and emerging out of the period's two characteristic mass phenomena: unemployment and the culture industry.[9] Sean McCann has demonstrated how a genre that began as a marginal and subversive art form became, in the 1930s, an expression of "one of the exemplary faces of American popular identity."[10] However, scholars of hardboiled fiction have sometimes tended to extend such claims into a kind of exceptionalist rhetoric. As Andrew Pepper writes, "There is little point in denying that the hardboiled *is* a predominantly American form or that it is best understood as a response to the particular social, economic and political conditions in the United States from the 1920s onwards."[11] While it is undeniably desirable that hardboiled fiction be read in its historical contexts, we must also acknowledge that some of those contexts reach beyond the borders of the United States. It is true that Chandler once claimed, "Marlowe is the American mind," but the quintessential hardboiled detective was created by someone who repeatedly affirmed his distance from that American mind (*NRC*, 56). The critical challenge that faces us, then, is to make sense of the writer's odd dialectic, which apparently com-

bines two equally implausible but powerful national mythologies, the individualist popularism of the pulps and the rarefied gentility of English high culture.

My aim in this chapter is to resituate Raymond Chandler as a transatlantic modernist whose characteristic hardboiled style and conflicted position in relation to mass culture derives from the idiosyncratic encounter he stages between his cultural adolescence on the British literary scene in the early years of the twentieth century and the unique emergence of modernity in Los Angeles from the 1920s to the 1940s. Chandler's temporally and geographically interrupted literary development has the effect of a map folded in such a way as to suggest an impossible continuity between the culture of aestheticism in fin-de-siècle London and that of violent pulp sensationalism in Depression-era Southern California. Broad areas of this map are occluded, especially the great centers of cultural ferment that provided the foundations of canonical high modernism in the years following World War I: the Paris of Joyce and Stein, the Berlin of the Dada movement, the New York of the Harlem Renaissance, and the London of the Bloomsbury Group. While his hero, Hemingway, attended Stein's Parisian salon with other members of the "Lost Generation," Chandler was earning $1,000 a month as vice president of the Dabney Oil Company, a significant player in the industry that began the extraordinary transformation of Los Angeles from backwater obscurity into the global city it is today. Similarly, when he worked alongside America's other celebrity modernists, F. Scott Fitzgerald and William Faulkner, as a Hollywood screenwriter in the early 1940s, he had arrived there by a very different course. The dialectic of Old Dixie and New South that precipitated Faulkner's modernism, or even Fitzgerald's uneasy geographic exchanges between his Midwestern roots and the East Coast during the Jazz Age, are structurally comparable to Chandler's own situation, and yet in both cases the aesthetic radicalism of the 1920s, experienced in New Orleans, Paris, and New York, played an indispensible role in the development of their responses to modernity. Los Angeles, it must be said, provided a quite different social and cultural environment. The Californian satirical journalist Morrow Mayo summed it up thus in 1933: "In the field of beautiful letters Los Angeles is virtually barren. A city one hundred and fifty-two years old, it has no more literary tradition or background or consciousness than Scranton, Pennsylvania . . . It is not conducive, it appears from the results, to the creation of worth-while literature."[12]

Chandler's experiences of modernism and modernity were thus marked

by abrupt shifts and aporias that paradoxically excluded him from participation in the canon of high modernism while at the same time aligning him closely with our developing theoretical apparatus of modernist studies in the last decade. In 2008, Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz offered an overview of the field's evolution along three axes—temporal, horizontal, and vertical—a broadening of modernism's historical and geographical reach, as well as a readiness to consider the vernacular modernisms of mass and popular culture.[13] The tracing of Chandler's modernism demands the superimposition of 1910 on 1939, of England on the West Coast United States, and of high culture on low. The chief result of modernism's definitional transitions has been in the fruitful dialogue between modernist and postcolonial studies, and in particular the response to Homi Bhabha's understanding of modernism as the intersection of nonsynchronous temporalities.[14] While falling outside postcolonial studies, Chandler's transatlantic modernism demands in this respect a similar conceptual framework. It was in the postcolonial context that Michel-Rolph Trouillot argued that modernity "is structurally plural: it requires an alterity, a referent outside of itself—a pre- or nonmodern in relation to which the modern takes its full meaning."[15] Yet Chandler's notions of Englishness, though formed in the early twentieth century, were primarily of a culture emptied of modernity, a timeless pastoral of the type he finally evoked in his strange short story, "English Summer: A Gothic Romance." In this sense, then, Chandler confounded the classic orientation of American modernism in its tendency to look west in search of models for modernity's alterity. Chandler's western gaze was a blank one across the monotony of the Pacific Ocean, which he describes in *The Little Sister* "trudging into shore like a scrubwoman going home."[16] It was eastward, across the land mass of the United States and the Atlantic Ocean, that he looked in search of a cultural tradition and an imaginary alternative to his dystopian vision of Los Angeles.

In rereading Chandler's work though the lens of his temporally disjunctive transatlantic modernism, we are given the opportunity to return to a question that vexed the writer himself, as well as the history of his critical reception. During the most productive part of his writing career, between 1935 and the late 1940s, the prestige of crime fiction within the cultural landscape of the United States was hotly contested by writers and intellectuals.[17] Chandler's insecure place in the canon of modern American literature dates back to precisely this debate, which continues in various guises up to the present day. In particular, scholarship on Chandler up to the mid-

1980s repeatedly justified its critical work through defense of his literary "quality," understood as the ability to extend the boundaries of the genre and withstand comparative evaluation against canonical modernists such as Hemingway and Faulkner.[18] The precedent for this comparative treatment can be traced to Chandler's own repeatedly expressed desire to be considered by reviewers and critics as a mainstream novelist (*SL*, 277). In order to understand the way he self-consciously positioned his fiction in relation to the stratification of high and low, we need to think carefully about the dramatic historical shifts in those categories that took place as the United States responded to the models of European modernism during the first half of the twentieth century, while developing its own mass culture industry centered on Chandler's hometown. His polemical 1944 essay, "The Simple Art of Murder," which stakes a claim not only for crime fiction's value as art but also for American hardboiled writing as qualitatively superior to the British detective tradition, represents only the boldest intervention among Chandler's continual negotiations of transatlantic differences in cultural prestige.

The fundamental component of such negotiations between cultural strata takes place in Chandler's fiction at the level of style, the modernist preoccupation par excellence since Flaubert. His correspondence demonstrates the extent to which he identified himself as a stylist and understood stylistic virtuosity as the only quality capable of redeeming literature from the taints of genre conventions or the demands for sociopolitical engagement. "The most durable thing in writing is style," he claimed in 1947, "and style is the most valuable investment a writer can make with his time" (*SL*, 88). Conversely, it was the public's lack of "a sense of style" which lay at the heart of his critique of Southern Californian modernity (*SL*, 181). Chandler's notebooks reveal that his style was itself the *locus* of a crucial transatlantic encounter and that he perceived the combination of his public-school education and his mastery of American English to be the source of his stylistic signature. In considering his style, however, we must go beyond the description, tabulation, and evaluation of stylistic trademarks—the outrageous similes and wisecracks for which he is so famous—in order to ask what style meant to Chandler, and how it functions within the novels as part of a fluid economy of cultural stratification. At stake here will be Chandler's investment in British and French aestheticist notions of style and their transposition to the alien desert soil of Southern California. Here, among the dusty canyons and dilapidated bungalow courts of Los Angeles, Chandler's style emerged in his late work into a kind of decadent impasse, shuttling between extremes of

burlesque and sentimentalism, marked by the compulsive reiterations of the rhetoric of dead ends and, above all, emptiness. In *The Long Goodbye*, this sense of desolation and emptying out is finally emblematized by the private graveled road Marlowe drives down in search of the quack charlatan, Doctor Verringer, and the scene he finds there. The cabins of a holiday camp betray "that desolate out-of-season look," with doors closed and windows "blanked by drawn curtains." The cabins are flanked by the classic topos of Chandlerian Los Angeles, the hollow form of the empty swimming pool: "and nothing ever looks emptier than an empty swimming pool."[19]

Chandler's Shakespearian Vernacular

The aesthetic implications of Chandler's transatlanticism can be found encapsulated in two odd letters he wrote in 1937 to a little-known, genteel periodical published in Los Angeles. The editors of the *Fortnightly Intruder* must have been surprised by the question posed to them. "Who, except those by life already defeated and wasting in the twilight, has any taste for such writing as yours?" (*SL*, 2). The problem, Chandler explained, was the "dead language" in which they wrote and their fraudulent imitation of the "soft birdsong of the Oxford close": "I'm afraid that . . . you come as a nostalgia for the Age of Culture, whatever that means" he told them (1, 2). Without admitting his English past, Chandler's letter is written out of startled recognition at his own adolescent culture appearing before him in 1930s Los Angeles. In a telling simile, he describes *The Fortnightly Intruder* as "a voice from an ancient chimney on a gusty October night" (1). The nostalgia for the "Age of Culture" was quite his own, and the scorn with which he treats the editors was that of a cultural guardian able to discriminate between the real and fraudulent. Despite their pretensions to Oxford English, Chandler accused them of writing "the flat language of the dehydrated New Englander" (2).

It is only in the second letter, responding to the editors' indignant affirmation of the purity of their American language, that the real import of Chandler's enigmatic posturing is revealed. "The best writing in English today is done by Americans, but not in any purist tradition. They have roughed the language around as Shakespeare did and done it the violence of melodrama and the press box. They have knocked over tombs and sneered at the dead" (3). The double maneuver represented in these two letters is the key to understanding Chandler's transatlantic modernism. We have already observed how George Grosz paradoxically kept faith with avant-garde

ideals by abandoning avant-garde practice, and Chandler's strategy here is comparable. While he aspired to late nineteenth-century ideals of the literary artist as master stylist, his method of pursuing them was through a purge of outdated mannerisms and rejuvenation through the American vernacular roughhouse. The reluctance with which he used the term "Age of Culture" is belied by his admission to Alfred Knopf nine years later that a book by Max Beerbohm, lent to him by the publisher, "belongs to the age of taste, to which I once belonged," and that he believed himself to have been "born half a century too late" (*SL*, 62). However, in a gesture that recalls Melville's claims, in "Hawthorne and his Mosses," of young Shakespeares "being born on the banks of the Ohio," Chandler found the "dead language" of the English literary tradition resurrected in American popular culture.[20] This is a paradoxical but powerful model, which evokes the cultural authority of Shakespeare in order to sanction "knock[ing] over tombs and sneer[ing] at the dead."

We are dealing here with a paradigmatic impulse in American modernism. Michael North has documented the appropriation of various forms of American vernacular, and especially African American dialect, by T. S. Eliot, e. e. cummings, Gertrude Stein, and others, with the ostensible objective of locating themselves outside the jurisdiction of bourgeois culture.[21] This colonizing of the linguistic world of modernism's "others," beginning with Eliot's return to Conrad's ventriloquism in *The Waste Land*—"Mistah Kurtz, he dead"—has become one of the defining tropes of high modernism. Chandler, when he wrote his letter to the *Fortnightly Intruder*, was still writing for the pulps and had yet to find the more prestigious home of Knopf for his fiction. Yet, we can see already how he was beginning to formulate a theoretical position comparable to his high modernist peers, based on transatlantic rather than racial difference.[22] For Chandler, then, the category of the American vernacular remained one of exoticism, objectified not only through class but also, more importantly, through national culture. As the *Times Literary Supplement* remarked in 1926, "A British visitor in America, if he has any taste for the niceties of language, experiences something of the thrills of contact with a foreign idiom, for he hears and reads many things which are new to him and not a few which are barely intelligible."[23]

We should not be tempted, then, into conflating the kind of nativist sentiments associated, say, with William Carlos Williams's interest in the American vernacular with Chandler's affinity for the language of melodrama and the press box. Rather, it is to a British high modernist like Virginia Woolf

that we must turn for a more accurate correlative. "For the Americans are doing what the Elizabethans did—they are coining new words . . . all the expressive ugly vigorous slang which creeps into use among us first in talk, later in writing, comes from across the Atlantic."[24] As Chandler wrote in 1950, "I arrived in California with a beautiful wardrobe, a public school accent . . . and a contempt for the natives which, I am sorry to say, has in some measure persisted to this day" (*SL*, 236). It was this sense of pseudo-colonial British cultural superiority, as well as his dedication to the ideals of aesthetic autonomy derived from the fin de siècle, that allowed Chandler to abstract the aesthetic potential of American language from the social reality of those who used it every day. One had to be English to make the American language fit for art.

If such chauvinism seems improbable, then we need only turn to Chandler's short essay, "Notes (very brief please) on English and American Style," which concludes by asking why the United States should be able to produce "writing as great as this age is likely to produce? The answer is, it can't. All the best American writing has been done by men who are, or at some time were, cosmopolitans. They found here a certain freedom of expression, a certain richness of vocabulary, a certain wideness of interest. But they had to have European taste to use the material" (*NRC*, 22). Alone, the American is historyless and undisciplined, with "no awareness of the continuing stream of culture . . . without manner or self control," while "such tradition as they have in the use of their language is derived from the English tradition" (*NRC*, 20–21). Chandler here positions the transatlantic cosmopolitan as the privileged bearer of authentic literary culture in the age of modernism, a hybrid, detached figure able to transform, through European taste, the innovations and violence of American English into literature. It is appropriate, then, that early in Chandler's first novel, *The Big Sleep* (1939), Marlowe assures General Sternwood that he "went to college and can still speak English if there's any demand for it," and then immediately demonstrates his familiarity with the underworld vernacular the general uses in talking about Rusty Regan, remarking "you learned to talk the language."[25]

Chandler's style, then, is acutely dialectic in its transatlantic negotiation of standard and nonstandard. A recurring point of reference for this structure is William Shakespeare. We have already seen that Chandler, like Woolf, understood the innovations of American vernacular language to be paralleled by those of Shakespeare and the Elizabethans. In his essay on style, Chandler remarks that American style is "a fluid style, like Shakespear-

ean English, and easily takes in new words, new meanings for old words, and borrows at ease and at will from the usages of other languages" (*NRC*, 20). In fact, Chandler was being far from original in his comparison. His comments here resemble not only Woolf's but also H. L. Mencken's in his opus *The American Language*. "The American today is much more honestly English, in any sense that Shakespeare would have understood, than the so-called Standard English of England. It still shows all the characters that marked the common tongue in the days of Elizabeth, and it continues to resist stoutly the policing that ironed out Standard English in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries."[26] As a writer who took an active interest in publications dealing with American slang, Chandler is likely to have known this book well.[27] Certainly, the notion of the American vernacular achieving a paradoxically greater claim to Englishness than the Standard version resonates throughout his writings on language and nation. This conflation of the Elizabethan and the American is most directly reflected in his original choice of title for his second novel, *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940), which was to be called *'Zounds He Dies*, a quotation from the famous murder scene in *Richard III*, in which the second murderer overcomes his conscience with the promise of material reward. Not only does this phrase relate to the theme of *Farewell, My Lovely*, but more importantly, it alludes to the presence of lowborn slang and cant within the works of the most powerful symbol of English high culture. With his second novel, Chandler was thus signaling quite explicitly his desire to draw upon an English high cultural tradition in his exploitation of American slang, a decision that takes on further significance when we remember that the opening of that novel contains the only example in his works of phonetically rendered African American dialect. The rhythmic music of the black bouncer— "No hooch, no gals, no nothing. Jes' the scram, white boy, jes' the scram"—is in contrast to the language used by the effeminate fop Marriott, whose overly correct and stilted English is immediately recognized by Marlowe. "A Harvard boy. Nice use of the subjunctive mood."[28] This dialectal discrimination returns us again to Chandler's essay on style. "Compared with [American English] at its best, English has reached the Alexandrian stage of formalism and decay" (*NRC*, 20). Chandler's transatlantic perspective on cultural decadence and aesthetics was to have an important impact on his fiction.

Chandler's investment in an innovative and vigorous vernacular deployed for the services of art, evident in the writings we have discussed from the late 1930s and early 1940s, coincided with the pivotal period of

what Michael Kammen has called "proto-mass culture."[29] This was a moment of transition from a commercial popular culture to a fully fledged mass culture, when, as Kammen argues, the corporate commodification of cultural products was yet to achieve the totalizing reach that became possible with the erasure of regional difference and the introduction of television sets to most American homes in the 1950s. Alternatively, following Michael Denning's work in *The Cultural Front*, we could say that this was the last point at which it was still possible for intellectuals, artists, and writers to maintain a belief in the utopian cultural possibilities opened up by popular cinema and mass-produced paperback books, just as critiques by Clement Greenberg, Dwight Macdonald, and others appeared from the late 1930s onwards.[30] In some ways, Chandler's enthusiasm for the vernacular, practiced in his early hardboiled fiction and his Hollywood screenwriting, participated in this broader cultural optimism. Elizabethan drama, he explained, was also a form of mass entertainment, and he insisted that, had Shakespeare been alive, he "would undoubtedly have written and directed motion pictures" (*SL*, 172). As late as 1947, he wrote in an essay for the *Atlantic Monthly*, "It might reasonably be said that all art at some time and in some manner becomes mass entertainment, and that if it does not it dies and becomes forgotten."[31] Whereas Adorno and Horkheimer, just three years earlier in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, had located mass culture as a response to late capitalism, Chandler at this point preferred to understand it as an ideal principle last realized in Renaissance England.

In this sense, Chandler offered a response to what Van Wyck Brooks identified in 1916 as the key problem in American culture, the widening gap between high and low. Brooks called for an integrated culture in which high and low could feed off each other, and, in particular, the energies of American slang could be assimilated into the "pure style" of literary language.[32] As Susan Hegeman has demonstrated, this challenge was to echo through American art, literature, and anthropology in the succeeding two decades, and Chandler's aspirations for a vernacular hardboiled fiction, filtered through a discriminating European sensibility, offered one answer.[33] This perspective would see him placed alongside not only Hammett but also Duke Ellington, Orson Welles, and Billie Holiday, as a figure exploiting a unique historical opportunity to break down cultural stratification in the United States following the demise of high modernism with the crash of 1929.[34] Nevertheless, we should not lose sight of Chandler's continuing elitism, the limits of what Sean McCann identifies as his "sentimental popu-

lism."[35] The seeming democratic idealism of this project is continually undermined in his writings by the conviction that, even if there should be a unified aesthetic culture available to all, it could only be produced by an educated elite. As he wrote to Hardwick Moseley in 1949, "we are dealing with a public that is only semi-literate and we have to make an art of a language they can understand" (*SL*, 173). We are still some distance, then, from the flowering of an authentic proletarian culture in the United States during the Depression and after, the years of the Popular Front. Chandler may have had insight into the culture industry after being involved in hardboiled pulp and Hollywood screenwriting, but he never discarded his own cultural adolescence in the British fin de siècle.

A sharper sense of how this temporally and geographically disjunctive structure operates can be gained through placing Chandler's cultural politics alongside the views of the Victorian English poet, critic, and intellectual, Matthew Arnold. We might begin by noting the superficial similarities in style and subject between Arnold's poetic output and Chandler's juvenilia, their mutual affinity for archaic language, conventional romantic imagery, and elegy. More pertinent, however, is the way in which Chandler's cultural politics in the mid-twentieth century emerged as an untimely rearticulation of Arnold's call for the restoration of aesthetics at the center of an authorized British culture. If Chandler's vision of a unified aesthetic culture appealing across society appears in tension with his elitist impulses and thereby leaves him offbeat with regard to American intellectual trends, it is because of the ground his vision shares with Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). Here, Arnold set out his own utopian aspirations, in which the British masses were to be brought within the civilizing influence of a national culture based on the reintegration of beauty and intelligence within poetry and religion. For Arnold, culture "does not try to teach down to the level of inferior classes; it does not try to win them for this or that sect of its own, with ready-made judgments and watchwords. It seeks to do away with classes, to make the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere, to make all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light."[36] Whatever radical politics we might now associate with the notions of "do[ing] away with classes," it is important to remember that, as for Chandler, equality is only relevant here insofar as the same culture is made available to all classes. Culture, however, is premised on the prior establishment of what Arnold described as "an authoritative cultural centre" capable of distinguishing "correct information, taste and intelligence."[37]

Reading Chandler alongside Arnold in this way provides a way of understanding the key transition in his thinking about the place of his writing within the broader contours of American culture. His optimism about the potential of mass culture was fundamentally conservative and nostalgic rather than genuinely utopian, a desire to return to mythical ideals associated with the English Renaissance. From this perspective, the increasingly rebarbative attacks on American materialism and intellectual vacuity that we see in *The Little Sister* (1949) and *The Long Goodbye* (1953), as well as in Chandler's correspondence and journalism, are entirely compatible with his rejection of cultural stratification and defense of popular arts. If Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* was an attempt to redeem British culture from the vulgarizing effects of the second industrial revolution, then we can understand Chandler's critiques after 1945 as a comparable response to the United States' development into a fully fledged society of mass consumption, in which aesthetics were subordinated to the logic of the market.[38] It was at this point that the Arnoldian dream became pointedly unattainable, as Chandler's 1949 letter to Jamie Hamilton makes clear. "You cannot have art without public taste and you cannot have a public taste without a sense of style and quality throughout the social structure. Curiously enough this sense of style seems to have very little to do with refinement or even with humanity. It can exist in a savage and dirty age but it cannot exist in the age of Milton Berle, Mary Margaret McBride, the Book of the Month Club, the Hearst press, and the Coca-Cola machine" (*SL*, 181). At the moment when the aesthetic realm can no longer define itself over and against the commercial, art can no longer exist. According to this logic, then, neither *The Little Sister* nor *The Long Goodbye* qualifies as an authentic work of art on Chandler's own terms. As we shall see, these two works, in their fraught, reiterative styles, betoken Chandler's reluctant lapse into complicity with the culture industry and the relinquishing of the cultural ideals set forth in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

Chandler also echoes Arnold in his attacks on the legacy of American Puritanism. In *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold laments the failure of a classical, discriminating intelligence to correct the tendency toward dogmatic obligations to duty, self-control, and work. This critique of excessive "Hebraism" finds its purest expression in his scornful evocation of the Pilgrim Fathers crossing the Atlantic carrying with them certain iconic figures of classical and Renaissance literature ill-suited to their philosophy and way of life. "What intolerable company Shakespeare and Virgil would have found them!"

exclaims Arnold.[39] His polemic against the "narrow and inadequate" Puritan vision, which dictates the strictures of social conduct without sufficient consideration of the aesthetic component of universal judgments, finds its correlative in Chandler's own discontent at the "social significance twaddle" that he complained was peddled by the US cultural establishment (*SL*, 238). "My argument is and always has been merely that there is no such thing as serious literature, that the survivals of Puritanism in the American mind make all but the most literate people incapable of thinking about literature without reference to what they call significance" (*SL*, 159). Seen through an Arnoldian lens, then, Chandler's hardboiled fiction begins to emerge as the natural home for the British conservative aesthete seeking relief from Puritan literary didacticism in the mid-twentieth-century United States. Through such a generic choice, the socio-ethical imperatives of cultural production that had been particularly pronounced during the Great Depression could be discarded in favor of more purely aesthetic aims. As we will see, Chandler's rejection of narrative plotting and his privileging of autonomous style needs to be understood in similar disjunctive contexts if we are to grasp his idiosyncratic transatlantic modernism.

Decadence and Style

In 1857, Charles Baudelaire wrote of how "a nation begins in decadence and starts in fact where others end up . . . Young and old at one and the same time, America chatters and drivels away with astonishing volubility."[40] We are used to associating the notion of cultural decadence in the modern era with mid-to-late nineteenth-century Europe, and even, as in the orthodox reading of Henry James's fiction, defining a decadent Europe in relation to a young and vigorous United States. Indeed, David Weir asserts that, "in America, the cultural conditions that produced the possibility of decadence in Europe simply did not exist."[41] In approaching Chandler's hardboiled novels, however, we are required to rethink such simple relational modes. For Chandler, as for Baudelaire, America's decadence paradoxically inhered in its deracinated modernity, in the absence of history rather than in its oppressive burden. This perspective develops out of a transatlantic interference of two temporalities, wherein the "sense of the past" that Chandler cherished in Europe is travestied and homogenized into an eternal present (*SL*, 11). While the United States is seen continually to appropriate the European tradition from its position at the margins of culture, its accelerated industrial and technological development in the late nineteenth and

early twentieth centuries place it in the advance guard of monopoly capitalism, thus leaving it "young and old at one and the same time." This is the structure informing Chandler's defensive response to the assumed gentility of the *Fortnightly Intruder* in 1937 and his extraordinary counterattack: "You are decadent in an environment which, for all its fancy pants, is still provincial" (*SL*, 1).

Chandler's sense of an attenuated American decadence, and the temporal interference that produced it, is thus firmly attached to his local, "provincial" environment of Southern California from the 1920s and 1930s, during which he first worked in the booming oil business and then began writing for the pulps. This location is significant because of the particular circumstances of Los Angeles's development during this time, which correspond closely to the structural conditions giving rise to American decadence. In one sense, the narrative of that city's development was understood as a microcosm of American cultural and socioeconomic evolution more generally. As one of the first great Californian writers, Louis Adamic, wrote in 1932, "Los Angeles is America. A jungle. Los Angeles grew up suddenly, *planlessly*, under the stimuli of the adventurous spirit of millions of people and the profit motive."[42] The consequences of the city's accelerated physical and economic expansion in isolation from the major cultural centers of Europe and the East Coast were elaborated by Morrow Mayo a year later in his observation that, since its attraction of thousands of "yokels" from the Midwest, "the place has retained the manners, culture and general outlook of a huge country village . . . some day it will catch up with itself mentally."[43] It is important to remember, then, that it was against this backdrop of immense and publicly noted disparity between Los Angeles's cultural and economic development that Chandler made the decision to relaunch his abortive literary career and begin writing for the pulps. During the course of the following twenty years, his fiction was to register the particular ways in which the city did catch up with itself, principally through the yoking of the aesthetic and the economic in the form of the culture industry, as well as through the geographic reorganization of the city in the 1940s.

Accordingly, it is in Chandler's first novel, *The Big Sleep*, that we can discern most clearly the structure of American decadence that "starts where others end up." As many readers have noted, the Sternwood mansion upon which Marlowe calls in the opening pages of the novel, with its ancestral portraits and images of chivalrous knights, derives straight from the European Gothic tradition, uprooted from time and place in order to be forcibly

relocated to Depression-era Los Angeles.[44] The ageing General Sternwood, however, is no scion of ancient noble lineage. Rather, the Sternwood money was made exactly where Chandler made his own (albeit with considerably less success): the oil boom of the 1920s, the disused relics of which are still visible from their position up on the hill. The novel contains various references to this dual temporality, the most obvious of which is Marlowe's observation on his last visit that "the whole estate looked as though it had been made about ten minutes before," designating it a floating historyless sign rather than an authentic historical presence.[45] Similarly, Marlowe jokes with the butler midway through the novel: "I met you about hundred years ago—or was it yesterday?" (677). Even Carmen Sternwood herself embodies simultaneous age and youth in the uncomfortable blending of childlike innocence and corrupt sexuality that defines her function in the novel.[46] The Sternwood's American decadence operates, then, through a kind of temporal dysfunction, which empties the past of significance and establishes a disorienting equivalence of late and early.

At the same time, Chandler self-consciously plays with the stock motifs of the fin-de-siècle European decadent literature he grew up with. The tropical flowers among which Marlowe first meets General Sternwood in his conservatory are familiar not only from Joris-Karl Huysmans's *À rebours* (*Against Nature*, 1884) but also from Émile Zola's novel *La Curée* (*The Kill*, 1871) and Maurice Maeterlinck's collection of poems *Serres chaudes* (*Hothouses*, 1889).[47] While Chandler's memorable simile gives the plants "nasty meaty leaves and stalks like the newly washed fingers of dead men" (592), for Huysmans's Des Esseintes, the hothouse orchids are "like hospital patients inside the glass walls of their conservatory wards," thus neatly providing a correlative for General Sternwood's own convalescence in the extreme heat and humidity, which causes Marlowe to sweat uncomfortably.[48] The artificial prolonging of the old man's life among the hothouse orchids metaphorically speaks to the unnatural persistence of the European cultural tradition in this arid, foreign climate. Edmund Wilson, perhaps without intending to echo Chandler, deployed a similar image in his essay on Californian writing, "The Boys in the Back Room," writing that Los Angeles "grew up, gigantic and vulgar, like one of those synthetic California flowers, and tended to drain the soil of the imaginative life of the State."[49] In *The Big Sleep*, though, the result, as even the general admits, is played out in the realm of sexual perversion, the plants' perfume having "the rotten sweetness of a prostitute" (593).

It is significant, then, that perversion provides Chandler's plot with its

initial engine. Geiger's secondhand bookstore, with its air of pseudo gentility, provides a veneer of respectability for the distribution and circulation of pornography. Marlowe, posing as a customer, requests a notoriously rare "full set" of John James Audubon's works. The book he eventually recovers, however, despite its appearance, provides an erotic travesty of *The Birds of America*. "A heavy book, well bound, handsomely printed in handset type on fine paper. Larded with full-page arty photographs. Photos and letterpress were alike of an indescribable filth. The book was not new. Dates were stamped on the front endpaper, in and out dates. A rent book. A lending library of elaborate smut" (609). Chandler's oblique pun on "birds," which relies for its effectiveness on the reader's familiarity with American art history, tells us something interesting about the way Chandler positions himself in relation to American decadence. Not only does he distinguish his own art here from the salacious reputation earned by the pulp genre he was leaving behind with *Black Mask* and *Dime Detective*, but he also begins to model his own ideal readership as discriminating art connoisseurs. The implication, meanwhile, is that this filthy book represents what happens to high culture in 1930s Los Angeles: it is "arty" but not art, a degraded tradition dressed up, however convincingly, as the real thing. The pointed contrast between the immaculate form of the book and its "indescribable" contents provides the first of many such instances of ritual emptying.

Chandler's aestheticist dedication to an autonomous style, pursued at the cost of narrative and plot, brought his own novels perilously close to this model of the brilliant but hollow American artwork. In this sense, the story of Chandler's mature writing career can be summed up as a continual struggle to resist complicity in the same, vacuous decadence he critiqued, an effort that became increasingly strained as the rise of mass culture gained momentum after the end of World War II. By the late 1940s, after Chandler himself had served the movie business as a screenwriter, *The Big Sleep*'s "elaborate smut" was transmuted into the work of what he called in one letter "made writers." "Hollywood, of course, is full of them; their stuff often has an immediate impact of competence and sophistication, but it is hollow underneath, and you never go back to it" (*SL*, 88).

The process by which Chandler's preoccupation with emptiness affects his prose is best introduced through a reading of his 1949 novel, *The Little Sister*. In the short chapter 13, Marlowe decides not to return immediately home after visiting Mavis Weld's apartment and instead takes a large detour north out of Los Angeles, west along Ventura Boulevard, and then back to

the city along the coast. It is one of the best-known parts of Chandler's oeuvre because of Marlowe's cynical and yet strangely lyrical monologue on the commodification of California, "the department-store state." We read his observations of stressed commuters hurrying home to the cheap comforts of the radio and sports pages, restaurants run by racketeers, and "circular drive-ins as gay as circuses with the chipper hard-eyed car hops, the brilliant counters, and the sweaty greasy kitchens that would have poisoned a toad."[50] Two years earlier, Chandler had admitted that he was "fundamentally rather uninterested in plot" (*SL*, 87), and, like many other passages in *The Little Sister*, this whole chapter is entirely superfluous to its advancement. The journey is offered as a purposeless detour for which Marlowe offers us no explanation, a digression of art-for-art's-sake militating against a genre supposedly defined by its subservience to narrative.[51] It is fitting, then, that Marlowe's eventual return into Los Angeles is marked by his admiration for the magical formal illusion it brilliantly sustains in order to mask the poverty of its material contents. "I smelled Los Angeles before I got to it. It smelled stale and old like a living room that had been closed too long. But the colored lights fooled you. The lights were wonderful. There ought to be a monument to the man who invented neon lights. Fifteen stories high, solid marble. There's a boy who really made something out of nothing" (269).

This moment provides us with an example of Chandler's obsession with atmospheres, foregrounded in his art from the moment Marlowe enters the stultifying humidity of General Sternwood's hothouse in *The Big Sleep*, and his encompassing observations on the weather and light, as well as the recurrence of olfactory imagery. Whether it is the "warm, foody air" that drifts into his office in the early evening in *The Lady in the Lake* or "that peculiar tomcat smell that eucalyptus trees give off in warm weather" in *The High Window*, Marlowe apprehends Los Angeles through its omnipresent, intangible, and nebulous atmospheres.[52] I intend the term in a more generally literary sense too, however, since it is of course Chandler's creation of the atmosphere of Southern California that has gained him entry into the canon and loosened, if not untied, his bonds to genre fiction. Atmosphere in Chandler is constituted by those moments when his style is given room to wander, to make something out of nothing. This is the reason behind Marlowe's grudging praise for the inventor of the city's neon light, the closest 1940s Los Angeles comes to pure aesthetics.[53] If chapter 13 is marked by ambivalence in finding a seductive quality in its commodification, it is because by the time Chandler wrote the novel he had realized the nature of

his impasse: the emphatic style he had always relied on to distinguish his writing from its competitors in crime fiction or the realist novel was also that which threatened to disperse into the extravagant, decadent, but empty forms of Los Angeles and its culture industry. If *The Little Sister* is the novel Chandler most despaired of during its composition it is because of this recognition. He complained to his British publisher that "there is nothing in it but style and dialogue and characters" (*SL*, 122).

Chandler's engagement with ideas of style go back to his earliest writings for the London periodical the *Academy*, in which he published an essay called "The Phrasemaker" in June 1912 when he was just twenty-four. The essay offers a satirical portrait of a type of writer based on the nineteenth-century aesthete with a quiet bourgeois existence. The phrasemaker's greatest horror is "the assertion that art is merely an adjunct of sociology. For him words and phrases live a perfect life of their own and should not be plagued by outside interference."[54] This view appears to anticipate, among other things, T. S. Eliot's criticism ten years later of Algernon Swinburne, whose language, he asserted, "has adapted itself to an independent life of atmospheric nourishment."[55] This may have become a standard line of modernist criticism of the Victorian period, but the interesting fact is that the essay offers in some respects a description of Chandler's own derivative poetry from the same period, which, like the phrasemaker's, "take[s] little interest in the rough-hewing of large questions" and avoids any kind of social content, preferring instead to dwell on knights, quests, and fairyland.[56] As William Marling remarks regarding Chandler's early essays, "he was guilty of the sins he damned."[57] The suspicion arises that "The Phrasemaker" is to some extent a self-examination, Chandler's attempt to define himself against a poetics he resisted and to purge himself of fastidiousness. The chief criticism leveled at the phrasemaker is not his faith in a transcendent aesthetics but rather his inability to "embroider both the mud-puddles and the rose-gardens of life into his art . . . he shuts his eyes to everything but perfection." This aesthetic selectivity leads to the essay's concluding sentence, which places the question of style at the heart of the problem: "He is behind the times, a phantom of another age who still wanders pensively in search of that bubble of art which our grandfathers used to call Style."[58]

Reading this sentence against all Chandler's mature writings about the absolute value and necessity of developing a literary style in fiction, as well as his comments about being born fifty years too late, it seems clear that this Victorian ghost was one he never exorcised. He looked back on the es-

says he wrote for the *Academy* and admitted their "childish petulance and frustrated attempt to be brilliant about nothing," and yet it was precisely the attempt to transform the empty nothings of Southern California into brilliant style that distinguished his mature fiction, as he carefully cultivated the image of the European stylist marooned in the American cultural desert (*SL*, 36). Chandler ceased to capitalize the *s* of style, but his voluminous correspondence testifies to his unceasing devotion to it as an ideal, a kind of "magic with words" (*SL*, 59). The principal shift from his use of the term in "The Phrasemaker" is that the style he sought could not be described as existing in a bubble. Rather, he understood style to be transcendent, to the extent that it transformed, in a kind of literary alchemy, the basest of vernaculars into pure gold or, as he put it in another early essay, could "create beauty out of plaster and vile dust."[59]

It is not surprising, then, that Chandler looked to Gustave Flaubert in search of literary perfection. Three of Flaubert's works, "Hérodias," "Un Coeur Simple," and *Madame Bovary*, feature in the list he provided in 1949 of works he considered "perfect," and it was Flaubert to whom he turned for comparison when lamenting the "second-raters" dominating the American literary scene.[60] From this perspective, Chandler's admission that *The Little Sister* had "nothing in it but style" comes to resemble something more like bragging, given Flaubert's famous intention to write a book about nothing, "sans attache extérieure."[61] Chandler's desire to write an article for the *Atlantic Monthly* called "The Insignificance of Significance," arguing that "it doesn't matter a damn what a novel is about, that the only fiction of any moment in any age is that which does magic with words," seems directly inspired by Flaubert's well-known correspondence (*SL*, 59). However, my own argument here is that it mattered very much that Chandler wrote about the vacuous Los Angeles elite and the faceless grifters who creep in their economic shadow following the Great Depression; about boredom, loneliness, and belatedness; and, in *The Little Sister* and *The Long Goodbye*, about mass-consumption film and fiction, respectively. All of these subjects themselves tend toward a hollowing of their own form and therefore present Chandler's "magic" style with its objective correlative. This is where Marlowe's driving tour in *The Little Sister* derives its power: the harmonies that Chandler orchestrates between his own writing and its ideal subject matter, as the two fall into a common rhythm. This consonance allows the prose to perform the seeming miracle of appearing to be "about" itself, while at the same time providing a realist perspective on Los Angeles. While commentators have

been quick to note how *The Little Sister* evidences Chandler's increasing disaffection for the emergence of American mass culture, they have tended not to acknowledge its balancing counterpart, seductive identification. After all, the chapter ends with Marlowe's return to the film actress he is supposed to have just left, a neat circular movement that begins in her apartment and ends at the movie theater where her film is showing. The detective is forced to admit, "she was good," but the film itself sounds like a parody of one of Chandler's own scenes from an elegant Los Angeles mansion, with immaculately suited men smoking endlessly, women ascending long curving staircases, and servants "carrying trays with drinks across the terrace to a swimming pool about the size of Lake Huron but a lot neater" (270).

This process by which form is emptied of its content saturates Chandler's fiction at every level, from the grossly material dead bodies drained of life to the moment in *The Big Sleep* when Marlowe tears up his own bedclothes after the bed has been vacated by Carmen Sternwood, so recently that "the imprint of her head was still in the pillow, of her small corrupt body still on the sheets."[62] Nowhere is it better expressed, however, than in the emptiness of the vernacular he deploys in his dialogue. Mencken articulates the sense of the American vernacular as a kind of improvised aesthetic play in *The American Language*, in which he admits that Americans were ready to "admit novelties for the mere sake of their novelty" and innovate new terms out of "a kind of linguistic exuberance, an excess of word-making energy," which "relates itself to the standard language a great deal as dancing relates itself to music."[63] By the time Chandler came to write *The Little Sister*, his own trademarked wise-guy dialogues had been explicitly emptied of communicative meaning. In the chapter following his night drive around Los Angeles, Marlowe returns to his office to be confronted by Joseph P. Toad and a junky named Alfred. This episode makes the point forcefully:

> "Come along, Alfred," the big man said to his companion. "And stop acting girlish."
>
> "In a pig's valise," Alfred told him.
>
> The big man turned to me placidly. "Why do all these punks keep saying that? It isn't funny. It isn't witty. It doesn't mean anything."[64]

It is a short journey from signs robbed of their signifiers to murder without motive; violence for the sake of violence. Alfred pulls a gun on Marlowe and pulls the trigger for no ostensible reason, but without consequence. Chandler's joke is that even the gun is empty.

In "The Simple Art of Murder," Chandler wrote that "Hammett's style at its worst was almost as formalized as a page of *Marius the Epicurean*."[65] It is a rather incongruous transatlantic pairing—the pioneer of hardboiled crime fiction and the English aesthete Walter Pater. And yet, as I have been arguing, English nineteenth-century literary culture remained an important reference point for Chandler (if not for Hammett) throughout his career. *Marius the Epicurean* is Pater's philosophical novel and an obvious choice for a writer of Chandler's generation in searching for an example of turgid and overwrought prose. However, as an aspiring litterateur in Edwardian England, Chandler would naturally have turned to Pater as the acknowledged theorizer of literary style, if not its greatest practitioner. (Pater himself would give that honor to Flaubert.) Pater's 1889 essay, "On Style," was the reference point for at least one generation of writers in raising style to the primary consideration in the production of art. The ideal process he described there, of "the transcribing, not of the world, not of mere fact, but of [the artist's] sense of it," led the way to a notion of style as an intensely subjective and all-encompassing organizing force within the artwork, some distance from the "bubble" of style mocked in "The Phrasemaker."[66] Pater made clear that literary style was, for him, dependent on the personality of the writer. "Literary art, that is, like all art which is in any way imitative or reproductive of fact—form, or colour, or incident—is the representation of such fact as connected with soul, of a specific personality, in its preferences, its volition and power."[67] When Chandler wrote of his own understanding of literary style in a 1947 letter, he demonstrated his debt to Pater's vision of style, whatever his views on *Marius the Epicurean*. "The most durable thing in writing is style, and style is the most valuable investment a writer can make with his time . . . the kind of style I am thinking of is a projection of personality and you have to have a personality before you can project it . . . It is a product of the quality of his emotion and perception; it is the ability to transfer these to paper" (*SL*, 88).

This paraphrase of Pater's "On Style" reinforces for us the extent to which Chandler continued to hold on to nineteenth-century ideals of literary style long after high modernism had declared them best forgotten. T. S. Eliot's famous review of *Ulysses*, one of the key documents of high modernism, declared Joyce's work to have "not in a negative, but a very positive sense, no style at all" and claimed therefore that "Mr. Joyce's work puts an end to the tradition of Walter Pater."[68] An important development in modernist thinking about style remains absent from Chandler's work.

What Peter Bürger said about the aesthetics of Dada and surrealism is also true of Joyce and the Eliot of *The Waste Land*: "There is no such thing as a dadaist or a surrealist style. What did happen is that these movements liquidated the possibility of a period style when they raised to a principle the availability of the artistic means of past periods."[69] In Chandler's prose, however, the dedication to a personal style remained unshakeable, to the point where, as he himself admitted, it became the only consideration in composition, beyond the minimum narrative requirements of the genre—the murder mystery and its eventual solution. Perversely, so long as Chandler's fiction remained concerned with absence at the level of content—bodies emptied of life, vernacular speech emptied of meaning, Los Angeles emptied of culture itself—then it realized by a kind of historical accident the modernist dream of finally reconciling form and content through style.

Hardboiled England

"English Summer: A Gothic Romance" belongs to Chandler's early and his late career. According to Frank MacShane, the earliest version dates to 1937, when Chandler was beginning to develop his reputation as a pulp writer and think ambitiously about his future. In a 1939 writing plan, Chandler stated his intention to develop it into a novel, "a short, swift, tense, gorgeously written story verging on melodrama, based on my short story" (*NRC*, 9). The project was then apparently shelved, as Chandler wrote a series of Marlowe novels in quick succession during the early 1940s and then became distracted by his screenwriting work in Hollywood. In 1957, however, following his wife's death and his return to London, he wrote that he was considering an English novel, "as a writer at home with the nuances of British English and yet ambitious to make it come a little more alive."[70] Chandler rediscovered the original "English Summer" and worked it up to a length of around 8,500 words before discarding it again. It saw publication only after his death, when MacShane appended it to his edition of *The Notebooks of Raymond Chandler*.

The story has been almost universally ignored by scholars and critics.[71] Chandler himself admitted to its being "over-written" (*SL*, 446), and indeed "English Summer" operates primarily through burlesque. This tendency toward self-parody is inherent in the genre of Gothic fiction, which defines itself through its various expressions of excess: stylistic, narrative, affective. In this sense, the Gothic is always already burlesque, its most compelling elements threatening to spill over into parody and farce. We must add to

this, however, the story's self-conscious anachronism in adapting this mode from its British fin-de-siècle moment, when the Gothic revival brought about by writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson, Rider Haggard, and Bram Stoker constituted an important feature of the literary landscape in which Chandler grew up. To write a "Gothic romance" in either the late 1930s or 1950s adds another layer of irony to a genre already poised on the edge of the self-consciously absurd. It is easy, then, to understand the embarrassment with which it has been dismissed as an aberration or anomaly by those who have made the case for the literary seriousness of Chandler's hardboiled writing on the basis of its relation to the criteria of gritty realism, restraint, and control.

The effect of "English Summer" is that of a distorted mirror held up to the Marlowe stories that many Chandlerians would wish not to acknowledge, reflecting as it does the incongruous elements that were always present there—the vampiric femmes fatales and imposing mansions inspired by the fin-de-siècle Gothic romance, the chivalric conduct of the conquering hero which derives not so much from Mallory as from the British nineteenth-century medieval revival, and the latent sentimentalism, which, as Chandler himself acknowledged, emerged unrepressed in *The Long Goodbye*. In the 1939 writing plan that first mentions "English Summer," Chandler described his projected novel, *The Brashear Doubloon* (which was later renamed *The High Window*) as "a burlesque on the pulp novelette, with Walter and Henry" (*NRC*, 8). Curiously, though, this particular idea seems to have fed into "English Summer," in which Walter Scott's historical romances and Henry James's transatlantic encounters are blended with the formal and thematic components of the hardboiled crime narrative. In fact, the plotting at the center of this story of an American man seduced by two English women reconfigures in comic mode the transatlantic exchanges that had always operated in hardboiled Los Angeles. In other words, "English Summer" reveals Chandler not just as a parodist but as a retrospective self-parodist, conscious of the ways in which his outmoded Englishness had pervaded his most American writing.

Despite its primarily rural English setting, to which the American narrator has been invited to stay with English friends in their summer cottage, we are never far from the distinguishing tones of Chandler's hardboiled style. For much of the story, these remain subdued but nevertheless discernible in passages like this description of the cottage, which echoes Chandler's earliest exercises in imitation of Hemingway: "There was a walk and a hedge

and a fence and a gate. That was outside. I liked all of that. Inside I hated one thing, the stairs" (*NRC*, 89). More striking than such resonances with his American writing, however, is the abrupt transition that occurs at the midpoint of the narrative, when the narrator first views the body of Edward Crandall sprawled across a bed, apparently drunk but in fact dead. This is the moment that self-consciously triggers Chandler's overt dropping of the romantic pastoral in favor of a resumption of the classic hardboiled mode. Millicent notices the stylistic shift herself, asking John, "aren't you being just a little strange?" and the reply tells us that it is entirely intentional on Chandler's part."'It's the American gutturals creeping out,' I said, 'after a long hibernation'" (102). From this point on, John's utterances, and especially "the hell of it"/"the hell with it" are barely distinguishable from Marlowe's, while his inexplicable technical expertise in dealing with the concealing of forensic evidence is comically out of place in the setting. By the time he begins to dictate the necessary course of action to Millicent, the deferential lover of the early part of the story has disappeared and been replaced by the American tough guy, and John can say, "There was no gentle English grayness in me now" (106). In this way, "English Summer" shamelessly displays the seams more delicately stitched together in the Marlowe novels, where, as we have seen, various stylistic and generic manners deriving from the British fin de siècle were assimilated into the hardboiled conventions established by Hammett and *Black Mask.* Here, though, the transatlantic dialectic is reversed, too, thus throwing it into unfamiliar relief. While the Marlowe novels drew upon the unexpected presence of chivalric honor codes in contemporary Los Angeles, in "English Summer" it is the odd flourishing of alien, hardboiled rhythms and motifs in pastoral England that arrest the attention and create a comic effect.

In a superficial sense, the England presented in the story is extravagantly dehistoricized, residing in a pointedly mythical pastoralism, which is consistently deflated and subjected to irony. The Crandalls' rented house is "one of those old, old, cottages in the country which are supposed to be picturesque, which the English go to for weekends or for a month in the summer when they can't afford the high Alps or Venice or Sicily or Greece or the Riviera, a year when they don't want to see their infernal gray ocean" (89). Similarly, the cottage is necessarily secluded, with a "firm, ancient lawn, and rustic chairs for tea, if it was warm enough for tea outdoors. It never was while I was there." Such moments indicate that this timeless England is, in fact, quite specifically that constructed by, and reflected in, various fin-de-

siècle and early twentieth-century writers with whom we know Chandler was thoroughly acquainted, whether that be Henry James or, indeed, the creators of the Golden Age English detective stories which he had criticized in "The Simple Art of Murder." In parallel to the staged removal of historical time, Chandler also foregrounds the slowing and disorientation of clock time, describing, for example, "the almost infinite hour of tea" and the sprawling, English summer afternoons, "which last, like the English themselves, forever" (100). I want to linger on this last phrase in particular, since it refers us to the linkage between those two temporal strata, the sense in which the drinking of tea on ancient lawns is ideologically underpinned by the myth of endless historical transcendence associated with the late imperialism of the British Empire and popularly disseminated in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century jingoism. John teases Millicent "waiting for tea —as if it were a revolution," and she replies with incomprehension: "Revolution? What in the world does that mean?" (91). The story portrays a historically invulnerable England at a time—in the late 1950s—when that myth lay already in tatters, as Chandler had witnessed on several visits, and its Empire was clearly crumbling following the loss of India and the Suez crisis. The narrator's remark that, "as the English always do, they lost as if they were winning" (111) tells us that the public denial of this inescapable fact colors the whole story.

Although "English Summer" was conceived before World War II and the clear emergence of the United States as a superpower overshadowing Britain, the version revised in the 1950s and published posthumously carries an implicit critique of Englishness that is barely detectable in the Marlowe novels, in which the nation retains its symbolic value as guarantor of cultivated manners and an authentic "sense of the past." The first glimpse of this shift comes in the passage where Millicent's voice causes John to remember scenes from the home front. "'You must be tired,' she said. 'You must be terribly hungry,' she said, in that flat, offhand, utterly dead voice that reminded me of the leave trains at Victoria during the war, the careless English women on the platform by the first-class carriages, saying those unimportant things, so easily, to the faces they would never see again. So careless, so smooth, so utterly dead inside" (101). This is one of several moments in "English Summer" at which the Gothic burlesque takes on a darker, nihilist aspect, as Chandler's style reverts to the cyclical reiterations of emptiness we observed in *The Little Sister* and *The Long Goodbye.* It is not coincidental that, like the conclusion of *The Long Goodbye*, this passage relates directly to

the dismantling of an ideal of Englishness in conjunction with World War II. There, it is the eventual revelation of Terry Lennox's deception, in spite of Marlowe's superficial affinity for his English manners, that provides the betrayal: "You had standards and you lived up to them, but they were personal. They had no relation to any kind of ethics or scruples. You were a nice guy because you had a nice nature. But you were just as happy with mugs or hoodlums as with honest men. Provided the hoodlums spoke fairly good English and had fairly acceptable table manners. You're a moral defeatist. I think maybe the war did it and again I think maybe you were born that way."[72] Terry himself blames his wounding and torture during the war for his moral deterioration, saying, "I got badly hurt and it wasn't any fun with those Nazi doctors. It did something to me" (734). We have little reason to believe him. In both cases, the veneer of social etiquette and respectability that passes for Englishness in the wake of the war is unmasked as a sham concealing an ethical void. This is the logic informing the blankness of Millicent's eyes, transformed from cornflower blue into dull forms "like gray glass" (100), as well as the polite policeman who takes tea with John before arresting him, whose face "expressed nothing but the bitter wind on the moor" (111).

Chandler gives his nihilist vision of a spectral and valueless postwar Britain its most powerful expression in the closing part of "English Summer," as John finds rooms in a shabby boarding house in Bloomsbury, London. "If you came home late at night, the white-faced specters of Russell Square haunted you, creeping along where the iron railings had been, as though the mere memory of them brought some shelter from the policeman's lantern. They haunted you all night with the ache of their 'Listen, dearies,' with the remembrance of their pinched lips, gnawed thin from within, their large hollow eyes in which a world was already dead" (110). In the classically Gothic trope of the uncanny, the England with which Chandler claimed familiarity all his life returns to him in this story in the form of supernatural terror, which even the narrator's newly emerged hardboiled American persona cannot repress. Once again, World War II features as the event presaging the emergence of this zombie-like nature, for it was during the war that the iron railings were removed from Russell Square in order to be melted down for use in munitions. They function here as symbols of the genteel London that had somehow died between Chandler's leaving it after World War I and his return in the 1950s.

There, is, however, evidence to suggest that Chandler's disillusionment

with his ideals of Englishness are linked to British military conduct during World War II, in particular the bombing of German cities. The final section of "English Summer" finds John at the center of the British elite establishment, on Piccadilly by London's Green Park, where he briefly meets Lady Lakenham. "I stared at her until she was quite out of sight. Motionless, utterly motionless. They moved around me politely, those English, as though I were a monument, or a Chinese sage, or a life-sized doll in Dresden china" (113). The choice of Dresden china for the final simile has powerful implications in the aftermath of the war, given the devastating Allied bombing raids that killed approximately 25,000 people in the city in February 1945 and were widely regarded as an international war crime. Chandler, as we know from his correspondence, was one of those disgusted by the decision to bomb German cities. "When it was used for saturation raids on cities like Hamburg, Berlin and Liepsig [*sic*], it was militarily of small consequence and morally put us right beside the man who ran Belsen and Dachau" (*SL*, 132).[73]

These allusions to World War II in "English Summer," taken alongside the ending of *The Long Goodbye*, conclude the narrative of Chandler's life-long transatlanticism with the complete dismantling of his English ethical code, in parallel with the postwar decline in British imperial power and global influence. There is also, however, a paradoxical return to the genres of his literary adolescence in the fin de siècle, and in particular the Gothic revival. This return invites us once again to think about the characteristic temporal disruptions that shaped Chandler's writing by occluding vital moments in modernist literary history. This generic decision is significant in two particular ways. In pursuing the first, we maintain our focus on British colonialism and global prestige by employing Patrick Brantlinger's influential notion of "imperial Gothic."[74] According to this account, the late Victorian Gothic revival emerged partly as a response to increased anxieties about the validity or sincerity behind Britain's imperial ideologies and, in particular, its proclaimed civilizing mission. The imperial Gothic typically represents an encounter between the colonizer and the colonized, in which the values of Empire are upheld through the projection of their opposites onto an atavistic other, often portrayed—as, for example, in Rider Haggard's *She*—as a seductive yet dangerous female, the archetypal femme fatale. In Brantlinger's formulation, the fears underlying Britain's "New Imperialism" are expressed through the recurring tropes of invasion or reverse colonization, personal regression or "going native," and the loss of opportunity for heroism and adventure in the colonies.[75]

"English Summer" performs a strategic reversal and displacement of these standard motifs of late Victorian Gothic by substituting a hardboiled American for British colonials and an overrefined English upper-middle-class woman for the primitive female savage. In this new Gothic structure, the colonizer has been denuded of his previous dominant role and instead comes to resemble the classic paradigm of the unstable colonial subject, oscillating between childlike innocence and murderous desire. As Conrad implies in the most canonical of imperial Gothic narratives, the heart of darkness is to be found not in Africa but at the center of colonial power and, indeed, within its most domestic and unassuming environments, whether in the parlor of Kurtz's "intended" or, as here, in the cozy pastoralism of a summer holiday cottage. Perhaps the most notable of these reversals and displacements, however, is that Millicent as femme fatale represents not so much the evolutionary regression into savagery typical of the genre but rather an excess of civilization, which leads to cruelty and violence. Chandler thus draws on another significant trend in fin-de-siècle writing, that of the theories of degeneration in Western Europe most famously proposed by Max Nordau. This recourse to transatlantic contrasts was always part of Chandler's intention for the story: the 1937 plan describes the "dramatic theme" as "the decay of the refined character and its contrast with the ingenuous honest utterly fearless and generous American of the best type" (*NRC*, 9).

The irony of imperial anxiety at the fin de siècle was that, even if the ideological basis for Empire was under interrogation by figures such as J. A. Hobson, the period actually saw a dramatic expansion of Britain's colonial dominion.[76] Indeed, as historians P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins argue, intensifying protests against Empire up to 1914 "were symptoms less of the erosion of Britain's 'hegemonic status' than of the continuing extension of her global influence."[77] We can be sure that the full force of British imperial power was impressed upon the pupils of Dulwich College during Chandler's time there and that, when he left the country in 1912, the security of the Empire remained relatively undiminished. When he came to revise "English Summer" for publication in the mid-1950s, however, Britain's decline was in clear evidence as the nation floundered in the midst of a colonial crisis, symbolized most powerfully by the loss of influence in the Middle East and the Suez Crisis of 1956.[78] In other words, Chandler's decision to return to his Gothic romance in this period and to narrate the decline of a particular ideal of English civilization indicates his own understanding of the historical

resonances of genre. The story recognizes the reconfigured Cold War power relations between Britain and the United States, in which the latter emerges as the dominant colonial power and the hardboiled American as the new interpreter of civilization. As Chandler wrote in his article on the gangster Lucky Luciano in 1958, "America has become an empire. Its money and influence penetrate everywhere outside the Iron Curtain."[79] The American narrator of "English Summer," in taking control of the murder scene and ensuring that Millicent is not punished for the murder of her husband, ensures that the chivalric code is finally disengaged from its English origins and assimilated into hardboiled American individualism. In this way, we can understand the expansion of US global power as paralleled by the export of its culture industry. Chandler remarked several times on the success of his fiction in Britain, where it sold better than in the United States and was more readily accepted as mainstream literature.[80] This success representative of the extraordinary popularity of American hardboiled crime fiction in postwar Europe, evidenced, for example, by the establishment by Marcel Duhamel in Paris in 1945 of Gallimard's *Série Noir*, which published in translation works by James M. Cain, Hammett, and Chandler, as well as the next generation of practitioners, such as Ed McBain, Chester Himes, and Jim Thompson.

The second significance of Chandler's self-conscious resurrection of the "Gothic Romance" comes back to the question of cultural stratification and of his hostile relationship to both high modernism and American mass culture. Stanley Orr has shown how novels such as *The Big Sleep* and *The Long Goodbye* draw upon the ideology and motifs of the imperial romance in their figuring of race and the body.[81] In addition to this ideological residue, however, we must also think about what this choice of genre, in the late Victorian context to which Chandler alludes, has to say about the cultural divide. Before the outbreak of World War I and the emergence of high modernism, "romance" represented one side of a vigorous debate in which it was positioned as an alternative to the realist novel.[82] The reason we know that this debate was of relevance to Chandler is that two of his essays, published in the *Academy* in January 1912, take it up directly. "The Tropical Romance" and "Realism and Fairyland" reprise the attack on realism that had taken place just over a decade earlier, criticizing writers for how they "rake over the rubbish-heaps of humanity" and "nose out the vices of unfortunate people," with the result that "unpleasantness becomes associated in their minds with truth."[83] Chandler lamented how "cold bands of Northern realists" had invaded the

"sacred domain" of "the tangled mysterious bazaars of the Orient" and the classic stages of colonial adventure, thus voicing one of the key fears proposed by Brantlinger as an impulse behind imperial Gothic: the loss of opportunity for modern heroism.[84]

Romances were the best-selling works of the fin de siècle, and despite vocal criticism by defenders of the realist novel, they represented a moment in British literary history when, as Nicholas Daly points out, "what we see now as a chasm between two distinct literary cultures, the great divide, was scarcely more than a crack."[85] That Chandler took the opportunity in the late 1930s, before he established himself as a crime writer, and again in the late 1950s, toward the end of his career, to evoke this moment before the "great divide" is important for our understanding of his oeuvre. That he had been able to write in a journal he described as "very highbrow" an article in defense of a literary fairyland tells us how much the cultural field had shifted, for the idea of such writing appearing in any of the elite American reviews and periodicals of the 1940s and 1950s is inconceivable. At the turn of the twentieth century, however, it was still possible for Henry James and Joseph Conrad, who were later co-opted as proto-modernists, to occupy a similar position of cultural legitimacy as H. G. Wells and Rudyard Kipling. All of them adopted elements of the romance in its supernatural, adventure, and fantastic guises. "English Summer" is, then, a resolute gesture of defiance, first of the proletarian realism of the Great Depression and then of the canon of high modernism being established in the United States after World War II. It expresses Chandler's backward-looking utopianism, the longing for the reconciliation of popularism and melodrama with cultural prestige that we find in the Marlowe novels, too.

Transatlantic Modernism and the Cultural Field

There is an undeniable pathos in subjecting "English Summer" to analysis. Chandler wrote optimistically in his plan that "if [it] becomes a smash hit, which it should be . . . I'm set for life" (*NRC*, 10). It never even saw print in his lifetime. MacShane's verdict sums up its critical fate: "it doesn't hold up as literature."[86] Such judgments, however, are yet another version of the "great divide" famously discussed by Andreas Huyssen and so strenuously resisted by Chandler himself.[87] The approach I have been adopting in this chapter has been to make room for an alternative reading of his works which, by taking account of his unusual transatlantic career, has necessitated a broader historical vision and thereby positioned the aesthetic values

of high modernism as a single component within a dialectical process. "English Summer," in so explicitly discarding the "hard and clean and cold and ventilated" modernist prose Chandler craved in the early 1940s (*SL*, 23), and in immersing itself in anachronistic kitsch, burlesque, and fairytale idealism, demands that we reread his hardboiled fiction in a different light. This means letting go of some of the more seductive assessments of his aesthetic mission, such as W. H. Auden's contemporary judgment that he wrote "serious studies of a criminal milieu."[88] Instead, we find a set of English aestheticist ideals constantly dramatized in their own failure to survive export into Californian modernity. "The cult of failure," he wrote to Charles Morton in 1949, "is embedded in all highbrow aesthetics," and it is for this reason, I would argue, that Chandler chose to make his own failures extravagant through mordant self-irony and stylistic excess.[89]

The 1949 letter to Morton sums up for us the impasse Chandler came to face as the categories of high and low in US culture were reified during the course of the decade. "The miasma of failure . . . is to me as offensive as the cheap gaudiness of popular success," he had told Jamie Hamilton two weeks earlier.[90] He saw, on one hand, a solipsistic intellectual elite and, on the other, a debased consumer culture dependent on the process of mass production. The difficulty of charting a course between them is evident in the responses Chandler made in his correspondence to *Partisan Review*, a publication that came almost to define highbrow in the 1940s. His subscription ran at least from 1947 to 1949, during which time he often commented on the debates it staged on aesthetics and politics. It was within these pages that commentators such as Clement Greenberg, Dwight Macdonald, and William Barrett began their series of influential attacks on the American culture industry and initiated a redefinition of highbrow aesthetics as resistance to consumer culture. One essay in particular impressed Chandler. "There is a beautifully written piece in the current number by William Barrett that warms my heart" (*SL*, 193). Barrett had attacked the way in which "Hollywood, Luce and the radio carry the bureaucratization of the writer furthest in this country . . . manipulated and strategically disposed like a group of factory hands on an assembly line," sentiments echoed by Chandler's own critique of the "standardized procedures" and "mechanical perfection" embodied in contemporary fiction of the 1940s.[91] It was clearly for criticism such as this, which purported to cut through the smooth surfaces maintained by the culture industry, that Chandler valued his subscription. "The highbrows, fantastic as they sometimes are, seem to be about the only

people we can rely on for a perpetual challenge to what passes for truth. That's why I read *Partisan Review*" (*SL*, 193). In this sense, Chandler found his ideal home among the highbrow readers of the review and identified with the cultural clerisy that wrote for it, claiming, "I should understand them well, for I was one of them for many years" (150). *Partisan Review* attracted Chandler because of the elite prestige it created for itself within the little magazine market. Alternatives, such as the *Saturday Review of Literature*, by contrast, were "selling what looks like the intellectual point of view to people who think they are intellectuals" (*SL*, 213).

Even so, Chandler remained deeply skeptical of the "clever-clever" contributors to *Partisan Review* and, in particular, their political agendas. In one letter, he suggests that the review's "primary object" was "not to think intelligently but to think in such a form as to exploit a particular set of political ideas" and nostalgically compared it to his memory of George Bernard Shaw lecturing on art-for-art's sake in London, "which seems to have meant something then" (*SL*, 96). In another letter, he pronounced his indifference to the furor over Pound's Bollingen Award in 1949, on which the review focused several consecutive issues, and its discussions of the definition of literature (*SL*, 180). It seems that he found *Partisan Review* too often distracted from the task of cultural guardianship by its impulses to interrogate the founding assumptions of culture itself. In short, Chandler was more interested in the war of position within the cultural field than in the self-consciously contemporary debates in politics and aesthetics with which Philip Rahv and his editorial team were concerned.

Ultimately, the reason why Chandler found it so difficult to navigate between the rocks of sham intellectualism and mass culture was that he had begun to articulate the sense in which the two categories, pace Greenberg and Macdonald, were collapsing into each other. This is the force of Sean McCann's analysis of Chandler's engagement with high modernism in *The Long Goodbye* through his depiction of Roger Wade and allusions to T. S. Eliot in Marlowe's exchange with Amos, Harlan Potter's black chauffeur. As McCann concludes, "in this light, modernism . . . becomes the anticommercial façade of a literary culture dominated by the market."[92] The critique of high modernism's complicity with the market logic it claimed to oppose is, of course, a familiar one. The argument I have been advancing is rather that hardboiled fiction represented for Chandler an increasingly claustrophobic generic space in which he was able to write without the freight of such betrayals weighing directly upon him. This space was unique to the cultural

field in which he participated. As Somerset Maugham wrote at the beginning of his essay "The Decline and Fall of the Detective Story" (on which he consulted Chandler), the reader of the 1940s was presented, broadly, with three options. If he favored neither the "greats," nor books of social relevance about the poor and underprivileged, then detective fiction was the obvious choice.[93] In occupying this space, Chandler was able to lay claim to cultural legitimacy when it suited him, bragging to Charles Morton about the "prestige" of having intellectuals "claw each other" over his work, but he could also retreat at the first sign of attempts, like Auden's, to find any kind of contemporary social or political relevance for it. "Why drag me in? I'm just a fellow who jacked up a few pulp novelettes into book form."[94] This strategy is also observable in Chandler's dealings with the notion of genre itself, on one hand refusing to transgress on the discrete conventions of hardboiled fiction established by Hammett, while on the other insisting that the reading public and reviewers consider crime fiction as part of the mainstream.[95] Thus, working within the genre, he was able to forgo the demand for formal innovation while still competing for prestige within the broader cultural field.

Such questions of cultural legitimacy oblige us to historicize our own disciplinary terminology, for it is clear that the evocation of Chandler's "transatlantic modernism" with which I began this chapter is at odds with the high modernism he so critically followed in the pages of *Partisan Review* and the *Saturday Review of Literature*, and that he subjected to ironic interrogation in his correspondence and fiction. The rubric of the "New Modernist Studies," as it has developed over the last ten or fifteen years, would appear to present no obstacles simply to assimilating Chandler's writing as one of many "modernisms" now proliferating.[96] In the context of the cases being made for "pulp" and "vernacular" modernism, a position for Chandler can surely be found under an increasingly broad disciplinary umbrella. We should, however, bear in mind the ways in which, as Stephen Ross has argued, the catholic interests of the new modernist studies have the potential to obscure the sense that scholars too have stakes in the games associated with the cultural field.[97] Modernism, Ross observes, has since the heyday of New Criticism accrued certain types of cultural capital for its readers as well as its writers: textual competencies achieved through professional training in taming and deciphering difficult, dense, complex texts. To annex new territories, whether pulp or postcolonial, under the banner of modernist studies is to rehearse the cultural politics of the old modernist elite in an

unacknowledged and uncanny fashion, even as they are superficially disavowed. The case I have been making for Chandler's transatlantic modernism has set out to show how his sense of cultural capital was determined by the disjunctions of time and space arising from his migrations between the United States and Britain. This series of encounters between noncontiguous spheres—fin-de-siècle London and post-Depression Los Angeles, Arnoldian ideals and the emergence of the culture industry, rarefied European aestheticism and the vulgar decadence of American civilization— determines the peculiar chords, discords, and unexpected harmonies we recognize as modernism in his work. Cultural legitimacy, which high modernists fought for and won for themselves, replicated as scholarly legitimacy by the New Critics in ways that clearly persist into the present, has been the issue that has done most to create the current disciplinary confusion over what modernism is and was.[98] In speaking of Chandler's transatlantic modernism, then, I am not contributing to the expansion of the field so much as inviting a reconsideration of its most seductive mythologies. What do we do with a modernism that isn't difficult, that professes its own cultural elitism and yet sells hundreds of thousands of novels, and that isn't even intentionally experimental? Chandler's obsessive preoccupation with the hollowing out of aesthetic form can be said to extend to his retrospective effect on our sense of modernism, stripped of its aesthetic autonomy, principled intellectual rigor, and heroic self-authorship. Perhaps most striking of all, though, is Chandler's resolute *untimeliness*, his yearning for an "age of taste" receding into the past, evoking precisely the Victorianism popularly understood to have been disavowed by Pound, Eliot, and Joyce.

4 The Taste of Freedom

Simone de Beauvoir, Vladimir Nabokov, and the Intellectual Road Trip

In early 1947, the French intellectual Simone de Beauvoir made a tour of the United States which began with a visit to her friend Richard Wright in New York and culminated in a road trip from California back to the East Coast via the Deep South by car and Greyhound bus. Her four-month journey is recorded in a little-read travelogue, written on her return to France, entitled *America Day by Day* (*L'Amérique au jour le jour*, 1948). This remarkable account, largely ignored by Beauvoir scholarship, makes no attempt at a comprehensive survey of the postwar United States but rather aims to recount "how America revealed itself to one consciousness—mine," presenting itself as a kind of existentialist phenomenology of the archetypal American road trip.[1] Vladimir Nabokov, Russian-born émigré novelist, conducted many road trips around the United States throughout the 1940s and early 1950s, first as a professional lepidopterist and later researching and writing his novel *Lolita*, which was eventually published in France in 1955. Limited by his teaching schedule at Cornell University to the summer months, Nabokov's 1947 trip to the Rocky Mountains National Park did not coincide with Beauvoir's spring tour, but his first trip in 1941 had followed a similar itinerary, including Santa Fe, Las Vegas, and the Grand Canyon. By the early 1950s, as he began to use the summer breaks to amass notes for and compose his masterpiece on his favored note cards, Nabokov's tours in his Oldsmobile were informing his fiction and being transfigured into the desperate flight of Humbert Humbert and Dolores Haze across the "crazy quilt of forty-eight states."[2]

In this chapter, I want to pursue a comparative reading of these two narratives in order to think about how an estranged émigré perspective on the classic American road trip might unsettle some of our assumptions about cultural hierarchies and the rhetoric of American domestic freedom that

pervaded the immediate postwar period. Simone de Beauvoir and Vladimir Nabokov are not conventionally thought of together in their shared cultural moment as European intellectuals coming face to face with the commodified landscape of early Cold War America. Yet in Beauvoir's *America Day by Day* and Nabokov's *Lolita*, we find a common set of concerns expressed in dialogue with the dominant cultural discourses of the day, including the stratification of taste and attendant debates about aesthetic authenticity, the social effects of mass consumption, and the very nature of freedom in the United States. While such matters have usually been considered in domestic terms, I wish to explore the consequences of approaching them obliquely through the work of these two Europeans, and in doing so to discover how transatlantic interference might alter our understanding of American mass culture in the period. My comparative approach is underpinned by the genre of the road trip, itself a potent master narrative for American exceptionalism during the early Cold War. Automobility was marshaled at this time as the symbol of autonomous American individualism, a claim neatly illustrated by the Ford Company's promotional rhetoric in 1956: "our ability to travel around this country in our own cars, anywhere we want, is a special kind of freedom, a unique freedom people have here in America, not quite like travel elsewhere in the world."[3] Beauvoir and Nabokov offer us an opportunity to revisit popular claims like this in interesting ways by virtue of their complex transnational perspectives, which find them both seduced by and radically critical of the ideological foundations of the American road narrative.

The importance of the late 1940s as a pivotal moment in the history of US tourism, and the occasion of the road trip's institutionalization as a nationally representative American narrative, is most clearly signaled by what is perhaps the best-known example of the road narrative genre, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957). It is a striking coincidence that Kerouac set out on his first transcontinental journey in June 1947, while Beauvoir was writing *America Day by Day* in Paris and Nabokov was roaming the mountains of Colorado, but the historical significance of *On the Road* is that it marks the point at which a clear tension arises between several modes of seeing and knowing the nation, set up as a result of the rise of mass culture. Domestic tourism in the first part of the twentieth century was conceived of as a ritual of citizenship, by which the tripper rediscovered America, assimilating democratic national ideals through empathetic reengagement with its people and vigorous encounters with its natural landscape.[4] In *On*

the Road, Sal's countercultural impulses lead him to use the road as a means of *evading* such establishment values, even as he endorses a different set of ideals promoted by a new mainstream, that of a mass consumer society founded on individual self-realization through recreation and leisure. In both its early twentieth-century form and in Kerouac's Beat vision, the road trip aims to penetrate to an authentic America. The crucial shift occurs at the moment when the very nature of authenticity becomes imperiled by mass culture and the birth of modern tourism, when the road itself, in the words of Marguerite S. Shaffer, comes "to symbolize the potential for both escape and pursuit."[5] This dialectic of escape and pursuit structures the ambivalent encounters with mass culture that we discover in *America Day by Day* and *Lolita*. These narratives bring to anxious consciousness what remains implicit in Sal Paradise's restless wanderings: the sense in which, as Beauvoir put it, "Americans are entangled in their freedom" (125), caught unknowingly in the debilitating, solipsistic cycles of desire and self-representation created by the institutions of mass culture, even as they believe themselves to be transcending them.

The concern that an expanding culture industry was complicit in insulating Americans from awareness of global historical crisis in the 1940s was common among US intellectuals and sociologists, including, for example, in Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.'s 1949 book *The Vital Center*. "Nineteen hundred looked forward to the irresistible expansion of freedom, democracy and abundance; 1950 will look back to totalitarianism, to concentration camps, to mass starvation, to atomic war. Yet for the United States the world tragedy still has the flickering unreality of a motion picture. It grips us as we see it; but, lingering over the familiar milkshake in the bright drugstore, we forget the nightmare in the resurgence of warmth and comfort. Anxiety is something we hear about."[6] For Schlesinger, one of the most influential public intellectuals in the United States at the time, the American people encountered the historical catastrophes of the mid-twentieth century in the manner of a cheap night's entertainment, a movie, and then a shake. The metaphor is fascinating not only for what it tells us about the public's attitude of complacent exceptionalism but also for its claims about two great institutions of mass culture in the late 1940s: the cinema and the drugstore. The power of Schlesinger's metaphor lies in the process by which the drugstore and cinema work in concert as part of a larger system, which induces alarm or anxiety only to neutralize it immediately without reflection. The homely and anodyne comforts of the drugstore, with its bright lights and

familiar milkshake, complete the illusion of security and transform the potential insights of the moviegoing experience into a mere entertaining thrill. Beauvoir and Nabokov exploit and disrupt the conventional functioning of this amnesiac structure. Their road narratives frequently find their protagonists in cinemas and drugstores. What interests me here, though, is how they import the aftershocks of recent European history into the warmth and comfort of American domestic space, transforming what, for Schlesinger, were the reassuringly familiar elements of the American cultural landscape into a threateningly alien space where the darkness of the movie theater and the bright lights of the drugstore become disorientingly confused.

Beauvoir and Nabokov in different ways identified and disrupted the processes by which the American culture industry sealed its consumers off from the world. Their decisions to write American road narratives at this time are particularly interesting, then, in the sense that the genre itself embodies a kind of patriotic solipsism of its own, its conventional goal being the recovery by Americans of an authentic sense of America and thereby of themselves, like the famous "freedom train" that toured the nation in 1947 in order to "re-sell America to Americans."[7] By that time, this aim was to be achieved not so much through unmediated communion with a sanctified wilderness but through the expanding apparatus of mass tourism, enabled in large part by expansions in the road network and the number of motels. These two developments, along with increases in leisure time and disposable income that accompanied the end of the war, are what created the boom in small museums, historic sites, parks, souvenir shops, and roadside attractions that we find on the itineraries of *Lolita* and *America Day by Day*, from the zoo Humbert and Lolita visit in Indiana, "where a large troops of monkeys lived on a concrete replica of Christopher Columbus' flagship," to the reconstruction of colonial Williamsburg, a "lifeless carnival" from which Beauvoir longs to escape.[8] She later claimed that, reading the American sociologists of the 1950s and early 1960s, such as David Riesman, A. C. Spectorsky, William Whyte, and C. Wright Mills, she realized that *America Day by Day* had anticipated the left critique of US postwar society by a decade.[9] Nevertheless, to argue that the European intellectual offered a uniquely objective and incisive critique of the postwar scene that should be privileged above myopic native perspectives is to risk installing a European intellectual chauvinism of the sort Beauvoir was accused of by the New York intellectuals during and after her visit.[10] A far more productive approach is to take into account the ways in which *America Day by Day* and *Lolita* de-

scribe, and indeed enact at various levels, the European's own entanglement in the systems through which America represented and reproduced itself in the Cold War. In both cases, the highbrow critique of cultural vacuity and inauthenticity is found compromised by more libidinal impulses toward personal autonomy, sexual desire, and the romantic sublime, which threaten to unravel it altogether.

Beauvoir, Movies, and Representation

Beauvoir's trip to the United States has to some extent been subsumed under the notion of the "existentialist offensive," the publicity drive orchestrated by Jean-Paul Sartre in an attempt to export French intellectual culture into the US public domain after the end of World War II.[11] While there is some truth in this association, the "existentialist offensive" risks obscuring the sense in which the United States had always been a significant component in Beauvoir's intellectual life, as it had been for so many of the Parisian intellectuals weaned on American gangster movies and the vernacular modernism of Hemingway in the 1930s. "New York is a legendary city in my past," she wrote at the beginning of *America Day by Day*, "there is no path from the reality to the legend" (17). Much like George Grosz, whose *Americanismus* made of New York a memory before he had even been there, Beauvoir arrived in the United States with a mêlée of preconceptions accumulated through the export of popular culture, the propaganda of the international left, and her own reading of American literature. Her description of her attitude toward the United States in the early 1930s is indicative: "Thus America for us consisted primarily of a montage of whirling images, superimposed on a soundtrack of hoarse voices and broken rhythms: Negroes in *Hallelujah* dancing or entranced, skyscrapers towering up to heaven, prison mutinies, blast furnaces, strikes, long silk-sheathed legs, locomotives, aeroplanes, wild horses, and rodeos. When we managed to disengage ourselves from this miscellaneous clutter, we thought of America as the country where capitalist oppression flourished in its most odious form. We loathed its racial policy, its lynchings, its twin evils of exploitation and unemployment."[12] Even this naïve catalogue of impressions conveys Beauvoir's sense, long before she arrived in the United States, that the nation embodied the contradictory spirit of modernity, combining the energies unleashed by technology, sexuality, and cultural heterogeneity with the oppressive violence and coercion demanded by accelerated capitalist development. The passage shows how important cinema and print media were in creating for Beauvoir

not just the United States' content but also the form by which it was imagined, an ungovernable "montage of whirling images." Beauvoir understood that to be able to build a reasoned argument against capitalism in the United States, she needed to perform an impossible "disengagement" from such "miscellaneous clutter," even though it constituted for her the substance of the nation's identity. Already here we can begin to discern the dialectic of escape and pursuit that structures her engagement with mass culture in *America Day by Day*, whereby the very media she wishes to evade in order to gain access to an authentic America also promise her its essence.

In *America Day by Day*, the "whirling images" that had first established the United States in Beauvoir's mind continue to condition how she perceives the nation. On arrival in New York, one of her earliest desires is to "see a view of the Battery as I've so often seen it in the movies" (23), and one of the recurring themes of her account is the need to reconcile the United States' representation of itself in the movies with her subjective view of it as she travels across the country. At several moments, and particularly in the earlier sections, Beauvoir is animated by an impulse to locate, grasp, and consume an essential America, in "an attempt to annex a new object to my universe," only to realize that the object belongs to the realm of memory and image rather than to reality (17). Wandering the streets of New York at night, she wants to "string the lights around my neck, stroke them, eat them," and yet she realizes that the stores she peruses will not satisfy her hunger because "none of the objects they're selling will give me New York" (35). Going into a movie theater to watch an adaptation of Chandler's *Lady in the Lake*, she finds "The black-and-white screen is like morphine . . . but when I leave, I'm disappointed again. I've forgotten New York once more" (35). As in Schlesinger's description of the amnesiac moviegoer, Beauvoir's failure to grasp the essence of the images she has seen is caught up with the institution of the drugstore, where she drinks orange juice before trying whiskey in a bar, reasoning, "Perhaps the taste of scotch would restore my memory of it in one fell swoop." Nevertheless, "It's powerless; and how can I get back something I've never found?" (36). Beauvoir realizes that the satisfaction she seeks originates from the American movies she watched in Marseilles in 1941, having crossed illegally into the unoccupied zone. "But now I'm in America," she muses, "and nothing can represent it anymore" (35). On that evening, she describes having seen at least four different movies, consumed like drugs and punctuated by drinks of orange juice and whiskey. Eventually, she finds herself staring at her own image in the warped

mirrors next to the ticket desk: "I look at myself; for a moment I stand and make faces at myself. My head is heavy. I go in" (36).

This episode offers us a condensed version of a process that continues throughout *America Day by Day*, in which Beauvoir narrates herself becoming caught up in the very processes that she is attempting to objectify. In this case, her submission is marked not only by the addictive cycle of consumption she undertakes but also by the moment of distorted self-recognition that makes of the self another grotesque image contrived for entertainment and offered up to the gaze. It is the closest Beauvoir gets to starring in her own movie about the United States, but it is also a moment of intense boredom. The opportunity for epiphany is passed over and becomes a punctuation mark preceding the inevitable return into the movie theater, where, once again, she will seek an essential America among the whirling images on the screen rather than in the world outside.

Later, as Beauvoir leaves New York to begin her road trip, the movies are described as allowing her to "anchor" herself in America, but by this point she has come to terms with the difference between seeing the nation represented in France and seeing it on American screens. "The exoticism of the drugstores, streets, elevators and doorbells had disappeared; they were quite simply realistic details" (83). Nevertheless, just as in Washington, DC, she takes refuge in the museum in order to "feel solid ground beneath my feet" (102), so the movies come to perform an important function for Beauvoir, distancing her from the American world that otherwise exists in such vertiginous proximity: "The screen transfigured everyday objects, reestablishing that distance between the drugstore and me that seems to disappear every time I drink an orange juice and yet continues to exist. It was through these black-and-white images that I first knew America, and I still think of them as its real substance. The screen is a platonic heaven where I grasp the Idea in its purity once more, an Idea that is only approximately embodied in the stone houses and the neon lights" (83).

As a strategy for addressing the problems presented by her earlier night at the movies, the reconstitution of the cinema screen as a "platonic heaven" is a remarkable and effective maneuver. Earlier in the 1940s, Simone Weil, Beauvoir's erstwhile peer at the École Normale Supérieure, had made a similar move in suggesting how "the talking cinema is very much like [Plato's] cave. Which shows how much we love our degradation."[13] Beauvoir inverts this critical formulation and rather than concern herself with the

difficulties of reconciling her experience of the nation with the America represented on the screen, she chooses instead to make moviegoing itself the quintessential American experience, after which the unmediated world around her becomes a mere shadow flickering on the walls of the cave. The inversion that takes place here, and makes of the material world of the United States a second-order experience judged on its fidelity to the screen, anticipates by fifteen years Daniel J. Boorstin's attack on postmodernity as manifested in the tourist experience: "Much of our interest comes from our curiosity about whether our impression resembles the images found in the newspapers, in movies, and on television . . . We go not to test the image by reality, but to test reality by the image."[14] In Beauvoir's case, however, the strategy of self-alienation from American experience evolved its own positivity during the course of the road trip, even as it negated much of the objective critique she launched against the culture of mass conformity elsewhere.

Once Beauvoir had left New York for the open road and exchanged the urban landscape for dramatic natural spectacles, some of her earlier anxieties over the possibility of a direct experience of an essential America began to reassert themselves. Her description of visiting Niagara Falls, for example, offers an intricate description of the complex touristic framework erected around the site, and through which the falls must be viewed from several perspectives, from platforms above and through glass-walled halls, telescopes, windows, and subterranean corridors below.[15] Her touristic experience was disappointing and frustrating, leaving her to wonder, "Perhaps if you walk at leisure, without a guide, on guard against the advertised attractions, you might succeed, despite the factories and the organized tourism, in recapturing the beauty of this great watery landscape" (97). Staying in Buffalo, Beauvoir spends the evening at the movies, first watching *The Razor's Edge*, "three hours of nearly intolerable boredom," and then consoling herself with the knowledge that, even if Somerset Maugham was English, "the film made from his novel is typically American" (97–98). To end the tedious evening, she returns, as usual, for another film, *Sinbad the Sailor.* "This film is so typically American that there's nothing to think about. All I can do is quickly forget it and go to sleep" (99). The juxtaposition of a visit to a natural spectacle during the day with a night at the movies is repeated throughout *America Day by Day*, just as it is on Humbert's road trip with Dolores in *Lolita*, and provides a striking comparative angle on two modes

of representing the nation in the late 1940s. While Niagara Falls arouses expectations of authenticity, which are then disappointed, the movie experience fulfills its promise, only to reveal that victory as strangely Pyrrhic, resembling the amnesiac structure of moviegoing described by Schlesinger or even the remembering in order to forget which Freud understood to be part of the grieving process in "Mourning and Melancholia." To be typically American, at this juncture, was for Beauvoir to be utterly forgettable, assimilated into the seductive but anodyne patterns of expectation and gratification.

The frustrated search for authenticity that Niagara Falls provoked in Beauvoir found its counterpart in her visit later to the Grand Canyon, where "The tourist is offered every possible artificial means of taming this exuberantly natural spectacle," and "the most ingenious efforts have been made to transform a natural marvel into a kind of amusement park" (181). Such reflections reveal on her part a rather naïve desire for an unmediated encounter with an untamed American landscape, which might be achieved if only, as at Niagara, one could "avoid the advertised attractions." Dean MacCannell, in his study *The Tourist*, writes, "Pretension and tackiness generate the belief that somewhere, only not right here, not right now, perhaps just over there someplace, in another country, in another life-style, in another social class, perhaps, there is a *genuine* society." Tourism, for MacCannell, in keeping alive such illusory dreams of the authentic, "is an alternate strategy for conserving and prolonging the modern."[16] *America Day by Day*, in its undisguised desire to see the primitive encounter with the American landscape as depicted in Beauvoir's favorite American writers—Faulkner, Steinbeck, and Caldwell—recreated in the road trip, leaves itself vulnerable to such sociological critiques in the Marxist tradition, which understand sightseeing after World War II as a series of fraudulent promises to bring about the eventual recovery or reconstruction of a mythological unity long since annihilated.

In this sense, Beauvoir's travelogue presents itself as a process of reluctant disenchantment with American mythology in the age of mass culture. Nowhere is this clearer than in her visit to the battlefield of Glorietta in New Mexico.

> The mumbling old man who serves as our guide claims that this battle turned the tide of victory away from the Rebels. He leads us on a rocky path that climbs to the summit of the outcropping. Again, it's a site from the movies or the illustrated weeklies: I've seen images of a flag planted among those blocks of stone and men

> in blue uniforms falling heroically on this soil. In a shrub perched at the top of a rise, a dozen invisible bells tinkle in the wind. What is their meaning? We concoct a number of unconvincing hypotheses and end by asking the guard. "I'm the one who hung them there," he says. "Why?" "So they would ring." (197)

This tragic-comic episode, which sees a monument to the heroic struggles of the Civil War reduced to a rehearsal of scenes already seen in the movies and popular press, culminates with the classic motif of the postwar tourist experience, the misrecognition of the authentic. In *Lolita*, the correlative to Beauvoir's abortive battlefield tour is found in the last item mentioned in a long list of attractions visited by Humbert and Dolores, albeit treated with shorter shrift: "Lincoln's home, largely spurious, with parlor books and period furniture that most visitors reverently accepted as personal belongings" (158). Both moments articulate the attempt to construct for tourists a consumable past, which might conjure mythologies of liberty and democracy loosely associated with the Unionist victory in the Civil War in order to fulfill the ideological needs of the early Cold War. A decade or so later, Boorstin's withering critique of mass culture in the United States found in domestic tourism an effective example of what he called the "pseudo-event," by which "we begin to be puzzled about what constitutes the 'original' of an event" and "are haunted, not by reality, but by those images we have put in place of reality."[17] With hindsight, Boorstin's notion of the pseudo event can be seen to presage later diagnoses of American postmodernism by figures such as Jean Baudrillard and Fredric Jameson.[18] *America Day by Day*, like *Lolita*, provides a way of tracing the crisis of representation and authenticity that came to be called *postmodernism* back to the late 1940s and the spectacles of domestic tourism. What makes it even more interesting, however, is the way in which Beauvoir uses the travelogue as a means by which to experiment with assuming different subject positions vis-à-vis this crisis, at one moment adopting the critically objective pose of the sophisticated intellectual and at the next throwing herself without restraint into the tourist experience. At other moments in her life, Beauvoir used the novel as a means to stage a comparable effect, most notably, in *Les Mandarins* in 1954. In the case of *America Day by Day*, the disorienting and contradictory quality of the work risks being understood as a sign of its failure to grapple philosophically with the challenges presented by the postwar United States. My own argument, however, is that disorientation and contradiction are precisely the point; the book demands to be read as a

continuation of her philosophical and political project in the 1940s, rather than as a departure from it.

Beauvoir's Ambiguity

One of the reasons why *America Day by Day* has been neglected in accounts of Beauvoir's philosophical development may be that her pursuit of an authentic encounter with an untamed America sits uneasily with the existentialist insistence on the fundamental negativity of being and the impossibility of realizing the synthesis of the in-itself and the for-itself. Existentialists, in other words, should know better than to place faith in such an apparently naïve recuperation of a mystical unity with the world. To adopt this view, however, would be to misread Beauvoir's philosophical position. As she explains in *Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté* (*The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 1947), the existential project requires the maintenance of a distance between the individual and world in order to achieve success on its own terms.

> I should like to be the landscape which I am contemplating, I should like this sky, this quiet water to think themselves within me, that it might be I whom they express in flesh and bone, and I remain at a distance. But it is also by this distance that the water and the sky exist before me. My contemplation is an excruciation only because it is also a joy. I can not [*sic*] appropriate the snow field where I slide. It remains foreign, forbidden, but I take a delight in this very effort towards an impossible possession. I experience it as a triumph, not as a defeat.[19]

In these terms, *America Day by Day* emerges as a significant companion to *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir's major contribution to existentialist philosophy, in which the negative effects of mass culture and the commodification of the American landscape are transformed into a useful system, which both invites and frustrates possession of the world. Gazing out over the Grand Canyon at dusk, Beauvoir has an aesthetic experience, writing of the sunset "bathing the rocks in a reddish light so their minerals liquefy, then evaporate," which then leads to a moment of realization. "I look. I understand the reverse mirrors and the moving windows, all those awkward attempts to grasp this scenery and harness it. It's here; I'm here: I'd like something to happen. I look—that's all—and nothing happens" (182). The complex apparatus set up with which to seize the Grand Canyon, the archetypal symbol of the American wilderness, is not an obstacle to Beauvoir's desire but rather an objective symbol of it. The mirrors and windows participate in her wish for "something to happen" in the face-off between sub-

ject and object but are necessarily impotent in the event. "Things are here, and I am here, and we come face to face. But in the end, I'm always the one who gets up and goes away" (182).

This process by which the arrival of mass tourism in the United States is transformed by Beauvoir from hindrance into an indispensible component of her philosophical meditations is most clearly demonstrated in an extraordinary passage reflecting on her drive through the deserts of California and Nevada.

> Tourism has a privileged character in America: it doesn't cut you off from the country it's revealing to you; on the contrary, it's a way of entering it . . . The gas stations, roads, hotels, and solitary inns exist only for the tourist and because of the tourist, and these things are profoundly part of America. These landscapes of the Far West we're travelling though exist essentially for the sake of tourists . . . No dream of rootedness challenges the giddy exhilaration of the car and the wind. We've left Las Vegas with no regrets. The night we spent there had value only because it had no tomorrow, and we drive on without regrets through this desert where a fixed camp, however temporary, is frightening. (167–68)

Here, the apparatus of modern mass tourism is assimilated into the idea of authenticity itself, in a maneuver that abandons the typically highbrow rhetoric of discrimination between the genuine and the fraudulent, between surface and depth, upon which the Western philosophical tradition has long depended for its critique of superficiality.[20] Whereas in the early sections of *America Day by Day*, Beauvoir adopts the classic perspective of the knowing intellectual traveler and chastises herself for being "still a tourist" (39), by this point the dreams of belonging and the kind of privileged knowledge that might distinguish an authentic American from an outsider have been replaced by a celebration of the deracinated existence of the road-tripper who paradoxically arrives at a greater understanding of the nation by skimming continually over its surface. It is the inaugural moment of the modern American road narrative, defined by the confluence of European existentialism and the emergence of a fully fledged mass culture in the United States.

The role that Beauvoir's time in the United States played in the development of her existentialist work has been acknowledged only to the extent by which her interest in the social conditions of African Americans as an exemplum of racial oppression influenced her subsequent study *Le deuxième sexe* (*The Second Sex*, 1949).[21] Nevertheless, it is arguably the "dull comfort"

bestowed by American capitalism upon its working class that played a more important role in the development of her arguments about the political application of existentialism.[22] In discussing the possibility of emancipation for oppressed groups, Beauvoir repeatedly evokes the US context as one in which the idea of leisure is exploited as a means of emptying freedom of its content and substituting for it empty cycles of repetition and homogenous time. For Beauvoir, the "trick of 'enlightened' capitalism" is to induce amnesia in the worker and to "make him forget about his concern with genuine justification, offering him, when he leaves the factory where a mechanical job absorbs his transcendence, diversions in which this transcendence ends by petering out: there you have the politics of the American employing class which catches the worker in the trap of sports, 'gadgets,' autos and frigidaires."[23] The doubled valence of the word "diversion" here speaks to the sense in which the existentialist project is conceived as a journey toward an open future from which the individual may be diverted, thus to discover themselves on a seductive but nevertheless dead-end road where the attempt at self-transcendence is aborted. The analogy with the tacky tourist trail, and the roadside signs for diners, motels, and various attractions, invites us to consider the slippage between advertisement and *divertissement* (Beauvoir's original French).[24] From this perspective, the existential freedom of the American road trip celebrated in her description of speeding across the Nevada desert comes perilously close to "petering out," and the road system emerges as an institution of control rather than escape. Perhaps most strikingly of all, the automobile itself, far from being the instrument of mobility, yields up its opposite meaning as "trap."[25] (This is the moment briefly to note how precisely *Lolita* takes up Beauvoir's four traps, from the obvious incarceration of Dolores within Humbert's Oldsmobile, to her captor's exploitative use of diversions like tennis lessons and the purchasing of electrical gadgets as gifts, and, finally, Humbert's comically antagonistic relationship with Charlotte's fridge, which "roared at me viciously while I removed the ice from its heart" [96]).

In *America Day by Day*, Beauvoir repeatedly addresses the notion of freedom in the United States, understanding it to be ubiquitous and yet always in flight toward abstraction. She doubts not the sincerity of the Jeffersonian autonomous ideals still admired in public discourse but focuses rather on "the large gap between theory and practice" opened up by the onset of monopoly capitalism in the United States and their consequent obsolescence. "The equality and freedom they permitted have been emptied of

their meaning by the demands of the present situation."[26] This problem, she jokes, "is why one can say that Americans are both the most idealistic people in the world and the most pragmatic. They have such respect for their ideal that they relegate it to an intangible heaven" (291). We have seen, however, the ways in which this distance between the Platonic ideal form, represented through mass culture, and the material grounds of the everyday also creates an authentically desiring subject capable, in the language of existentialism, of assuming her own lack and thereby transforming frustration into triumph, a question of reconceptualizing leisure as a form of serious play. "The movement towards freedom," she tells us in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, "assumes its real, flesh and blood figure in the world by thickening into pleasure, into happiness . . . The saving of time and the conquest of leisure have no meaning if we are not moved by the laugh of a child at play."[27] Beauvoir's concerns with the idea of happiness in the United States are revisited in the conclusion of this book, but even this claim gives us a sense of how the notion of freedom for her is always inflected by affect, whether the "giddy exhilaration" experienced on the desert highway or the pleasure offered by orange juice in the drugstore. It is the thickening agent of affect that promises to redeem mass culture by preventing it from turning leisure into pure, abstract time.

"But there was something about life over there," Beauvoir later wrote of the existentialist fascination with the United States in the 1930s, "something vast and unencumbered, which fascinated us at a deeper level, beyond all question of right and wrong."[28] This fundamental undecidability at the root of American experience is borne out severally in *America Day by Day*, including at its conclusion, which tells us that "to 'like' America, to 'dislike' it—these words have no meaning. It is a battlefield, and you can only become passionate about the battle it is waging with itself, in which the stakes are beyond measure" (380). With the retrospect afforded by the 1960s, Beauvoir seems also to have inflected her memories of the thirties with the romance of her later American road trip, since she imbues it with the values of existential freedom, "vast and unencumbered." It is important for us to remember that ambiguity was for Beauvoir an ethical position, which developed into the controversial foundation for her philosophical project. Her unpredictable and contradictory "passion" is what marks her out in the cultural history of European émigrés in the mid-twentieth century, a distinction that was evident to her even while she was in the United States. Struck by the number of émigrés she met, Beauvoir noted the European culture

she shared with them and yet distanced herself from their company. "Too accustomed to America to feel it day by day, they weren't sufficiently rooted here to love it or hate it intelligently. Nearly all of them denigrated it too systematically to help me get to know it. The people I want to see again when I return are those free-thinking Americans who participate in the life of this great continent without being lost in it." (83). The systematic denigration of the United States and especially its mass culture by the intellectual migration is a narrative with which we are only too familiar. With Beauvoir, however, we find a different emphasis by which the cultural critic must participate affectively without being subsumed, *feeling* the nation day by day and ultimately risking freedom in order to affirm it. Cynicism is the only taboo.

Lolita's Existential Travesty

The specter of Dolores Haze, who in *Lolita* spends much of 1947 in the college town where Humbert teaches French, makes a brief and uncanny appearance in *America Day by Day*. Beauvoir is hosted by a professor at a southern university and, arriving at his home for dinner, is presented with his daughter, "aged fifteen and carefully made-up to look something like Bette Davis" (230). The academic's daughter "walks around the living room in slacks and bare feet" (*Lolita*'s opening paragraph—"she was Lola in slacks" [9]), and Beauvoir observes her with great interest, "dressed to go to the movies with her date," noting her "naively sophisticated freshness, her lively uninhibited grace." Beauvoir has interesting things to say about adolescent sexuality in late 1940s America, arguing, for example, that the sex lives of young people "are not the passionate relations of lovers but rather an extension of certain ambiguous childhood games." Similarly, Humbert presents his abuse of Dolores as a continuation of the sex games she played at camp.[29] But Dolores's double in her account also offers another example of the self-referential circuits of American mass culture, which we have already noted and which play an important role in *Lolita*, too. The academic's daughter makes herself up to look like a movie star in order to go to the movies. In *Lolita*, such ironic moments are driven further into travesty. Dolores "sees herself as a starlet," as her mother says, but in addition Humbert himself resembles a cultural icon, "the conquering hero" he finds on an advertisement pasted on her bedroom wall.[30] Their evenings together during their several road trips across the United States are repeated travesties of the teenage movie date. "We took in, voluptuously and indiscriminately, oh, I

don't know, one hundred and fifty or two hundred programs during that one year."[31] Humbert even fantasizes that the classic culmination of the movie date, the kiss, is to be performed with Dolores "clos[ing] her eyes, as Hollywood teaches" (48). Dolores is not the only one to daydream Hollywood scenarios.

Those nights at the movies are travesties of the teenage date, in which both parties in their different ways imitate the stars they watch, but the even greater travesty I wish to foreground here is that of the road trip itself and of the ideals of existential freedom that accompany it. As Humbert plans his second road trip with Dolores, fleeing Beardsley for the West, he tells her school that "we would be back as soon as my Hollywood engagement came to an end (inventive Humbert was to be, I hinted, chief consultant in the production of a film dealing with 'existentialism,' still a hot thing at the time). Actually I was toying with the idea of gently trickling across the Mexican border" (208). He is right—existentialism was "a hot thing" in 1948, partly because of the publicity generated by Beauvoir's visit and the appearance of Sartre's *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme* in English translation in the previous year.[32] The French existentialist intellectual is one of the several guises Humbert assumes in the course of the novel for the purpose of concealing his relationship to Dolores Haze. Having spent the 1930s in Paris, where he "discussed Soviet movies with expatriates," "sat with uranists in the Deux Magots," and "published torturous essays in obscure journals," he judges himself well placed to adopt such an identity.[33] As his concocted story suggests, Humbert views existentialism as a European fashion that has been assimilated into the workings of the American culture industry, another example among the many Nabokov identified, of American misreadings and misappropriations of European cultural currents in the early Cold War. (In an acerbic review of Sartre's *La Nausée* in 1949, he described existentialism as "a fashionable brand of cafe philosophy."[34]) In *Lolita*, though, the misrecognition of French cultural capital as a guarantor of liberal values is exactly what Humbert relies on in order to dupe the Americans around him. Under cover of an existentialist respectability, his road trips with Lolita invert the rhetorical conventions of automobility and domestic tourism, conjuring cruelty and tyranny out of democracy and freedom.

Beauvoir's ethical commitment to the idea of an "open future" becomes in *Lolita*'s road trips twisted into its opposite. If, as we have suggested, *America Day by Day* moves toward an ideal of leisure and tourism as serious play demanding to be treated as an authentic and affective project aimed at lib-

erty, then Humbert deliberately exploits the empty, homogenous time of the road as a means to deny Dolores her freedom. "Every morning during our yearlong travels," he writes,

> I had to devise some expectation, some special point in space and time for her to look forward to, for her to survive till bedtime. Otherwise, deprived of a shaping and sustaining purpose, the skeleton of her day sagged and collapsed. The object in view might be anything—a lighthouse in Virginia, a natural cave in Arkansas converted to a café, a collection of guns and violins somewhere in Oklahoma, a replica of the Grotto of Lourdes in Louisiana, shabby photographs of the bonanza mining period in the local museum of a Rocky Mountains resort, anything whatsoever—but it had to be there, in front of us, like a fixed star. (151-52)

In this way, Dolores's future is determined and controlled in a strictly quotidian sense, one day at a time, through the false teleology of tourist attractions that "give her the impression of 'going places,' of rolling on to some definite destination" (152). It is worth dwelling for a moment on the imagery and metaphorical devices in this passage, too, since the vision of a sagging skeleton being kept tenuously alive—"surviving"—until the close of each day carries with it special freight, especially given Nabokov's discovery in 1945 that his brother Sergey had died of starvation in a Nazi concentration camp.[35] The description makes of the road-tripper an emaciated captive kept alive purely for the entertainment of her captor, "Herr Humbert," whose name is repeatedly misunderstood as German.[36] The metaphorical "fixed star," which "had to be there, in front of us," if we follow the logic of such imagery, aligns Dolores's abuse during the trip with the plight of the European Jewry under National Socialism, obliged to wear the Star of David as a marker of their ethnicity. Once we begin to read them in this way, *Lolita's* American road trips begin to offer up a transatlantic critique, in which they allegorize rather than escape from the historical catastrophes of wartime Europe. The harmless motels that conventionally symbolize American mobility become authoritarian spaces full of inhospitable injunctions and suspicious inquiries about race and religion, while the car itself becomes "a furnace when we got in again."[37] Humbert describes himself as dwelling "deep in my elected paradise" during this time, briefly invoking a democratic ideal, but "it is a paradise whose skies were the color of hell-flames" (166).

This transatlantic haunting effect, by which the open road reveals itself to be saturated with the imagery of incarceration and death in Europe, is the

means by which Nabokov positions mass extermination as mass culture's repressed European twin in the novel. Indeed, the only moment at which the Holocaust is permitted to emerge explicitly in *Lolita* is in Humbert's dream, in which he attends "tedious vivisecting parties" surrounded by "the brown wigs of tragic old women who had just been gassed" (254). As the repressed content of American postwar optimism, the corpses of European Jews appear in Beauvoir's travelogue, too, in a terrible literalization of Schlesinger's opening metaphor for popular denial as a night at the movies. "Benevolence is carried so far here that they refuse to believe, for example, in the German atrocities. Watching the films from Buchenwald, the American shrugs his shoulders: those corpses aren't Russian or French—they're Austrians who were killed in a bombing, and they're being passed off as Nazi victims" (74). As for Nabokov, the postwar United States is a place that, Beauvoir tells us, "denies the existence of evil" (73) and thereby requires that the Holocaust become a kind of historical excess to be siphoned off, displaced and concealed behind ubiquitous, everyday signs. "What have you been up to?" Humbert asks Dolores as he picks her up from "camp" and begins the road trip. "We baked in a reflector oven," comes the reply, "isn't that terrific?" (114). Such puns, which seem to increase in number each time one reads the novel, are a literary effect of a type unavailable to Beauvoir in her travelogue, where consideration of the death camps is juxtaposed with, rather than superimposed upon, the itinerary.

The stakes of *Lolita*'s transatlantic haunting are thrown into relief when the novel is compared with Kerouac's *On the Road*, in which the trip from East to West is figured as a journey in time as well as space, between "the East of my youth and the West of my future."[38] The narrative concludes with a lyrical homage to the unbounded and indeterminate future embodied in the American continent, that "raw land that rolls in one unbelievable huge bulge over to the West coast," in which "nobody, nobody knows what's going to happen to anybody besides the forlorn rags of growing old."[39] By contrast, *Lolita*'s road trips are characterized by Humbert's paranoid control of Dolores's leisure time and by his battle to contain the "unaccounted-for time leaks" that represent her encounters with Quilty (186).[40] In a broader sense, the trips themselves form an important part of his grander project of preventing her development into adulthood altogether, as if to suggest that the endless motels and attractions are themselves able to halt the process of aging and maintain Dolores in a futureless temporal stasis. The optimistically open temporality of Kerouac's road trips is para-

doxically premised on its privileged relationship to the sealed North American landmass, the spatial boundaries of which are observed to turn hermetically in on themselves at the novel's conclusion, when night "blesses the earth . . . and folds the final shore in."[41] For Humbert in *Lolita*, though, this spatiotemporal dialectic is reversed, and the classic Cold War trope of containment anxiety is displaced into a fear of temporal breach, so that Dolores's final evasion of him is an escape from the car into time itself, figured as "a side door crashing open in life's full flight, and a rush of roaring black time drowning with its whipping wind the cry of lone disaster" (253–54).

The purpose of the road trip in *Lolita* emerges as a strategy for preventing leisure from being transformed into any more meaningful form of temporality as change, conflict, or risk. The abundance of leisure time, which increased in the United States on average by one day per week between 1920 and 1960, became in the early Cold War one of the defining characteristics of American civilization. David Riesman, for example, described the "abundance psychology" he saw among increasing portions of society, "capable of 'wasteful' luxury consumption of leisure," in contrast to the European masses who "simply have not had the money and leisure, until recent years, to duplicate American consumership patterns."[42] It is rarely remarked upon just how important the idea of leisure is to Nabokov's American fiction, the protagonists of which tend to occupy academic or literary professions that offer them swathes of unoccupied time to dispose of as they wish, just at the moment when the idea of leisure itself was becoming institutionalized alongside automobility as a symbol of cultural superiority over the Soviet Union. A man of independent means, Humbert proves himself more than able to adapt and exploit wasteful "American patterns of consumption." Indeed, the physical movement involved in the road trip itself is conceived of in these terms, as Humbert describes how he and Dolores "consumed those long highways"—in much the same way she consumes gooey fudge sundaes, sodas, and movies (152)—thus presenting them as innocent and model American consumers. *Lolita* represents an interesting moment at which Humbert's genteel European notions of leisure as idle play (his father, indeed, amassed his fortune as the owner of a luxury hotel) merge with postwar American notions of leisure time as an abstract resource to be put to use, consumed, and exhausted. Abundance of leisure becomes here ambivalently polyvalenced, providing both the illicit opportunity for sexual abuse on the road and the latent possibility of liberty, which must be consumed in order to prevent it from realizing itself.

The dialectic of escape and pursuit visible in *Lolita*'s treatment of leisure consumption is more overtly manifested in particular episodes from the novel dealing directly with the culture industry. Humbert's description of the common narrative structure of the musicals Dolores and he consume, for example, refigures in ironic fashion their own fates. The "unreal stage careers" of their protagonists anticipate the phony promises of acting jobs with which Quilty lures Dolores away from her captor, while the "white-haired, dewy-eyed, technically deathless . . . initially reluctant father of a show-crazy girl" clearly resembles Humbert himself (170). The father figure in the movie "always finished by applauding her apotheosis on fabulous Broadway," in a cruel inversion of Humbert's distress at discovering Dolores's brief pornographic career. Most importantly, however, the "essentially grief-proof sphere of existence wherefrom death and truth were banned" in which the characters dwell, provides a neat summation of the tawdry world that Humbert creates for Dolores on their road trip, the death of her mother unmourned, the notion of time as aging refused (170). Consequently, it transpires that the very movies to which Humbert takes Lolita in order to escape the social consequences of their relationship are the agents of their fate, pursuing them relentlessly across the nation. "We saw many of the newsreels up to half-a-dozen times," explains Humbert, oblivious to the irony, "since the same weekly one went with different main pictures and pursued us from town to town" (170). Elsewhere, he notes Lolita's susceptibility to the seductions of American advertising, observing that "it was she to whom the ads were dedicated: the ideal consumer, the subject and object of every foul poster" (148). What he cannot acknowledge is that even the cynical gaze of the European intellectual tourist is not immune to the logic by which such circuits of desire operate.

Lolita and Mass Cultural Aestheticism

The majority of criticism on *Lolita* has assented to Humbert's views on American mass culture—that the movies, along with Lolita's other "beloved things" (148), such as popular jazz, junk food, and mass circulation magazines, were examples of a debased culture subject to the autonomous control of the European highbrow intellectual, who was capable of appropriating them for art. As David Castronovo writes, "What's formulaic and insipid suddenly becomes original and funny. The worst of our culture becomes art . . . He masters it for a greater purpose than mere irony or kidding or low-level satire. We cringe, but we also rise above the junk and laugh and cry

because we see that passion shines forth from American kitsch."[43] We can see in such readings the extent to which the old mythology we observed in Chandler's writings, about the necessity for a European sensibility in turning American vernacular into aesthetic gold, has retained its power in more recent criticism. There have, however, been several challenges to the received view of *Lolita*'s relationship to the American culture industry, most notably by Rachel Bowlby in her rehabilitation of Dolores from vulgarian to "poetic reader" and her interrogation of the binary dividing the literary from advertising. Bowlby argues, "*Lolita* demonstrates . . . that advertising has its poetry, that far from being incompatible, advertising language and literary language share an assumption that objects of all kinds acquire their desirability through the words and the implied stories in which they are represented."[44] According to this view, Lolita's enchantment by the consumerist promises offered by the road trip is evidence of a poetic sensibility comparable to Humbert's more painterly appreciation for "the honest brightness of the gasoline paraphernalia against the splendid green of oaks," an image itself derived more or less directly from Edward Hopper's "Gas" (1940), or for the "blueish mountains never attainable" that preside over the American landscape.[45] The correlative argument I wish to make is that *Lolita* shows how European aestheticism finds itself paradoxically in tune with the vistas of the postwar American road trip, divested of its radical stance toward the dominant commercial culture to the extent that even Humbert fails to recognize how his estranging libidinal gaze reaches such a comfortable accommodation with the ways of seeing and desiring fostered by the culture industry.

This accommodation is perhaps clearest in the episode that inaugurates *Lolita*'s road trip, in which Humbert enjoys passing what he calls a "poetical afternoon of fastidious shopping," buying clothes for Dolores in a large store (108). Over the course of several pages, Nabokov presents in meticulous detail Humbert's fetishizing of the process of picking out clothing for his stepdaughter, which gives his imagination free rein to fantasize about her in various styled outfits, "phantom little Lolitas dancing, falling, daisying all over the counter" (108). Humbert in this episode takes great pleasure not only from buying commodities for his Dolores but also from her imagined transformation into a commodity herself, packaged in shorts, briefs, and pajamas for his sexual consumption. He has a keen if covert sense of the functioning of commodity aesthetics, of how, as Wolfgang Haug writes, "The illusion one falls for is like a mirror in which one sees one's desires and

believes them to be real."[46] Accordingly, he muses, "There is a touch of the mythological and the enchanted in those large stores where according to ads a career girl can get a complete desk-to-date wardrobe, and where little sister can dream of the day when her wool jersey will make the boys in the back row of the classroom drool" (108). This is a crucial moment in the novel because here Humbert, like Beauvoir, acknowledges the vulgarity of such dreams and yet submits willingly to their seductions. "Oh, let me be mawkish for the nonce!" he pleads, "I am so tired of being cynical" (109). The cynicism disavowed here is presumably that assumed by Nabokov himself in his 1944 book *Nikolai Gogol*, in which an American advertisement for a radio is scorned for its suggestion "that the acme of human happiness is purchasable, and that its purchase somehow ennobles the purchaser," as well as for its creation of "a kind of satellite shadow world in the actual existence of which neither sellers nor buyers really believe in their heart of hearts."[47] Humbert's self-conscious mawkishness is then precisely the point in the shopping episode, a complex and contradictory feeling afforded by holding the transformative potential of commodity aesthetics in tension with their ultimate fraudulence. This affective structure echoes in the position Beauvoir ascribes to the "free thinking Americans" whose company she values, "who participate in the life of this continent without being lost in it" (83).

Colin Campbell's study *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, which builds an argument for the inseparability of the rise of modern consumerism from the romantic tradition, provides one way of understanding *Lolita*'s complicity with postwar American mass culture. Campbell develops the notion of "modern hedonism" to describe a certain behavior among the economic elite of the late eighteenth century, in which "individuals employ their imaginative and creative powers to construct mental images which they consume for the intrinsic pleasure they provide," in much the same way Humbert does in the clothing store. As opposed to the older form of realistic hedonism, modern hedonism realizes the potential for purely abstract pleasure, made possible by the "skilful manipulation of sensation," rather than by the traditional sources. In Campbell's account, modern hedonism finds its ideal correlatives in the development of consumerism, with its characteristic encouragement to pursue, through advertising and other sensory stimuli, an apparently endless series of wants, and in the ethic of romanticism, in which "wanting rather than having becomes the main focus of pleasure seeking" (hence, for example, Keats's famous "heard melodies are sweet, those unheard are sweeter").[48] Humbert's "poetical day

of fastidious shopping," according to this perspective, makes sense in the light of his classically romantic declarations toward the end of the novel, that "it may well be that the very attraction immaturity has for me lies not so much in the limpidity of pure young forbidden fairy child beauty as in the security of a situation where infinite perfections fill the gap between the little given and the great promised" (264). Humbert admits that the founding premise for his narrative rests not so much on the integrity of his aesthetic object as on a form of desire structured in the manner of the advertisements that surround him everywhere on his trip. Thus, the distinctions between the highbrow European aesthete and the vulgar American consumer, on which critics of the novel have long leaned, become increasingly untenable.

The clothing store episode introduces for the first time in the novel the idea of shopping as a leisure activity, one which then forms the very fabric of the road trip, as the act of sightseeing and that of purchasing commodities become intertwined through the various souvenirs, refreshments, and commercial attractions demanded by Dolores. In *Lolita*, the shopping trip and the road trip are more or less indistinguishable, despite Humbert's attempts to keep them distinct through his aestheticizing of "the inutile loveliness" of the natural landscape (152). In both cases, it should be emphasized, his strategy is that of a modernist formal estrangement, which continually presents its material correlative through his own status as émigré or alien. Although the American landscape presents Humbert at first with "the shock of amused recognition," thanks to the popular images of the United States exported to Europe in the early twentieth century, "gradually the models of those elementary rusticities grew stranger and stranger to the eye, the nearer I came to know them" (152).

The paradoxical process by which strangeness and familiarity are evoked only to have their conventional roles inverted is also at play in the clothing store. Here, the "knowing air" with which Humbert examines the articles for sale threatens to unmask him not as an alien but rather as suspiciously at ease in his environment, leading him to "intentionally put a naïve male question" to the sales assistant. The store itself is presented in hyperbolically estranged forms, an "eerie place where I moved about fishlike, in a glaucous aquarium . . . from rock ledge to seaweed, and the belts and bracelets I chose seemed to fall from siren hands into transparent water" (108). Nabokov's point of reference for this seabed scene is the French surrealist Louis Aragon's *Le Paysan de Paris* (*Paris Peasant*, 1926), which repeatedly

deploys submarine imagery in describing the commercial arcades of the Passage de l'Opéra, lit for example by "a glaucous gleam, seemingly filtered through deep water."[49] The allusion corresponds neatly to Humbert's time in Paris between the wars, but the point I want to make here is that the formal strategies of French surrealism were themselves domesticated by American mass culture during and immediately after World War II, when well-known artists such as Salvador Dali and Yves Tanguy sparked off the popular assimilation of surrealist motifs, stripped of their most macabre and unsettling elements, into commercial window displays in prominent New York clothing stores.[50] In Nabokov's next novel, *Pnin* (1957), Victor is taught by his painting teacher that "Dali is really Norman Rockwell's twin brother kidnapped by gypsies in babyhood," and such gleeful disruptions of the received binary structuring the European avant-garde's relationship to all-American kitsch is also at work in more covert ways in *Lolita.*[51] In Charlotte Haze's living room, a magazine Humbert picks up as he fondles Lolita opens onto the "Picture of the Week," showing "a surrealist painter relaxing, supine, on a beach, and near him, likewise supine, a plaster replica of the Venus di Milo, half-buried in sand." (58). Likely modeled on *Life*, Charlotte's magazine shows the extent to which surrealism had infiltrated the most middlebrow domestic spaces.

The United States traversed in *Lolita*'s road trip, then, is already emptily surreal and provides the perfect object for Humbert's "fancy prose style" (9). This is conveyed not only in the cumulatively comic eclecticism of the lists of dubious tourist attractions that fills its most famous pages (from a "church built in the shape of a wine barrel" to a "fish hatchery in Idaho"[52]) but also in the desolate small towns where Humbert's lyricism reaches full pitch.

> Nobody strolled and laughed on the sidewalks as relaxing burghers would have done in sweet, mellow, rotting Europe. I was alone to enjoy the innocent night and my terrible thoughts . . . A large thermometer with the name of a laxative quietly dwelt on the front of a drugstore. Rubinov's Jewellery Company had a show of artificial diamonds reflected in a red mirror. A lighted green clock swam in the linenish depths of Jiffy Jeff laundry. On the other side of the street a garage said in its sleep— genuflexion lubricity; and corrected itself to Gulflex Lubrication. An airplane, also gemmed by Rubinov, passed, droning, in the velvety heavens. How many dead-of-night towns had I seen! (281–82)

This passage produces an ambivalent tension between, on the one hand, its scatological joke about mass culture as a system of material consumption

and excretion and, on the other, the impulse of the neon lights toward a pure aesthetics.[53] In a gesture typical of Humbert, the lights shining on an empty street are decontextualized and stripped down to pure form in preparation for their assimilation into his solipsistic imagination, but their degraded materiality is nevertheless reintroduced through the process of signification. The various reflections and dialogues by means of which the neon signs communicate with one another make up a kind of threatening autonomous system operating independently of human interference, as if to fulfill, in ironic mode, the European symbolist fantasy of an ideal self-contained language. The image of sparkling gems against a velvet night sky, for example, recalls Mallarmé, the poet Nabokov described as "watch[ing] over my adolescence."[54] The swimming clock, however, belongs more properly to Aragon's submarine surrealist imagery in *Paris Peasant*. Nabokov was unable to countenance the conceptual debts owed by French surrealism to the Freudian unconscious, which he always countered with an absolute insistence on his own fully conscious and intentional imagination. Yet the danger of mass culture in the passage lies in the possibility of a debased ("artificial") aesthetic system that could resemble Humbert's own, while simultaneously taunting him from a world external to his conscious control. Erich Fromm, in *Escape from Freedom*, had written several years earlier of how the menace to American freedom emanated from the way man had "become estranged from the product of his own hands . . . not really the master any more of the world he has built; on the contrary, this man-made world has become his master."[55] In Nabokov's passage, such estrangement acts as both threat and promise. Surrealism's radical interrogation of consciously exerted autonomy makes it the ideal arena within which Nabokov can explore the common ground between the aesthetics of the European avant-garde and the new world of postwar American consumer society.

Humbert "enjoys" the surreal, small-town, nighttime scene, just as he does his "poetical afternoon of fastidious shopping." These are moments at which his highbrow cynicism is momentarily held in abeyance and cultural authority is relinquished to the pleasurable but endless systems of sexual and aesthetic desire put in motion by the culture industry and realized in the form of the road trip itself. We have seen how Beauvoir, in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, finds value in the excruciating joy she derives from "the impossible attempt at possession" and can compare that to the gap between "the much promised and the little given" lying at the heart of Humbert's own American project. Both figures, nevertheless, are able to discern in such

dynamics the Janus-faced culture industry, even as it threatens to subsume their autonomy altogether. For Beauvoir, this risk is expressed in the constant emptying of freedom into abstraction while the American working classes are distracted through incremental rises in the standard of living. In *Lolita*, Nabokov displaces the latent negativity of the culture industry onto an individual child who, despite her painfully ironic claim that "this is a free country" (46), is exploited unknowingly through a comparable system of short-term material rewards while her captor revels in the disorienting aesthetic estrangements offered by the commercial landscape.

Abstraction and Americanism

In the final section of this chapter, I would like to broaden the perspective offered through the preceding close readings by thinking about the respective places occupied by *America Day by Day* and *Lolita* in their authors' oeuvres, and by resituating our analyses of their road trips within the cultural field of the early Cold War. The contrast between the two works' critical fortunes could hardly be more stark. *America Day by Day* has been routinely neglected in the major studies of Beauvoir, such as Toril Moi's influential intellectual biography, which devotes just one paragraph to it.[56] Despite the "renaissance" recently undergone by Beauvoir studies, *America Day by Day* and the fascination with American mass culture it evidences remain largely ignored, even as Beauvoir's standing within the various traditions of continental philosophy and feminism have been repeatedly reassessed.[57] The dominant frameworks for reading her work remain steadfastly European, suggesting that the embarrassment over her enthusiasm for certain elements of American culture that marked her encounters with highbrow intellectuals in New York has in some sense persisted to the present day. To be influenced by Merleau-Ponty is one thing, by John Steinbeck quite another. *Lolita*, by contrast, is now generally considered to be Nabokov's greatest work in both critical and commercial terms, a break-through that ushered in his mature period, during which he wrote his other most successful English-language novels, *Pale Fire* and *Ada*, and became one of the United States' most feted and prestigious writers. What interests me here is how the very different afterlives of these two works in the cultural field are inflected dramatically by their treatment of the idea of America in the period of its ascension to cultural as well as political superpower status.

Beauvoir and Nabokov were fascinated in different ways by the technical problem presented by the American road trip since Whitman. They consid-

ered how to mediate in their writing between the concrete materiality of the United States—represented by the vast scale of its geography and the bewildering abundance of consumable objects—and a more abstract set of American ideals, whether democratic values popularly associated with liberal capitalism or some still more nebulous sense of an authentic national essence. As Beauvoir wrote, "In this country that's so ardently oriented towards concrete signs of civilization, the word 'abstraction' is always on my lips. I must try to understand why" (264). The closest she comes in *America Day by Day* to attempting a formal resolution to this problem comes while listening to cowboy songs in a remote town in California. The music provokes a vision of the United States composed of fragmentary memories of her trip, from African Americans "dancing with abandon at the Savoy" to balls "rolling on the waxed lanes of bowling alleys" and crowds "silently watching a drama painted in black and white" (132). Significantly, however, Beauvoir resists the trajectory of her reverie toward ebullient idealism, concluding instead with a kind of ambivalent impasse. "My memories already make me dizzy: America is nowhere. But music escapes the limitations of time and space. It can capture something out of thin air and give it to me. At least that's what I think tonight" (132). For Beauvoir, the idea of America risks dissolving completely if abstracted from its material fragments, a possibility that complements the critique she launches toward the end of *America Day by Day*, in which democratic ideals are located in an intangible realm unavailable to most of the population, who are "free only to the extent that they submit, which is the most abstract of freedoms" (288).

Beauvoir takes a notable step in proposing an aesthetic analogue to the flight toward abstraction she noticed in American political thought. Several of the dominant trends encouraged by the American cultural establishment in the 1940s are found to have become distant from their material roots during the process of their assimilation by the culture industry. Bebop, originally an "effort to express the quiver, the palpitation of life in its most fragile and feverish aspect," had been transformed by white musicians into "an entirely external tremor; the breathless rhythms survive, but they no longer have any meaning" (263). The modernist arts of cubism and surrealism, meanwhile, "living languages in Europe," had similarly been "emptied of their contents, with only the abstract scheme preserved" (263). We have already examined one of the ways in which Nabokov treats the arrival of surrealism in American mass culture, but more generally in *Lolita* we can say that he transposes this concern over the movement from material to ab-

stract in America entirely into the realm of aesthetics.[58] Indeed, it could be argued that the most effective way of tracing the modulations of Humbert's voice is through his ability to manage such moments stylistically. In the long passages describing the itinerary of his road trip, he moves effortlessly from long catalogues of miscellaneous attractions into lyrical evocations of the natural world before concluding with "distant mountains never attainable," a transition in which the paraphernalia of the tourist industry is swept up in the movement toward an American sublime. At moments of despair, however, the aesthetic impulse is reversed, as when he realizes that "our long journey had only defiled with a sinuous trail of slime the lovely, trustful, dreamy, enormous country that by then, in retrospect, was no more to us than a collection of dog-eared maps, ruined tour books, old tires, and her sobs in the night" (175–76). This dialectic of the material construction of the American landscape as seen on the road, and the ethereal abstractions of the ideal it conjured, had always been at the heart of Nabokov's project in *Lolita*. Concerning the jacket design of the first American edition, he wrote to Walter Minton that he imagined a "romantic, delicately drawn, non-Freudian and non-juvenile picture for *Lolita* (a dissolving remoteness, a soft American landscape, a nostalgic highway, that sort of thing)," and in the following letter stipulated further: "I want pure colors, melting clouds, accurately drawn details, a sunburst above a receding road with the light reflected in furrows and ruts, after rain."[59] The "accurately drawn details" of Nabokov's vision, just like the items on Humbert's itinerary, are fungible, precise only insofar as they prepare for their own subsumption, "melting" or "receding" into the abstract, metaphysical presence offered by the nation itself. Whereas for Beauvoir such dissolution represents a seductive but existentially problematic response to the American road trip, Nabokov's novel depends upon it aesthetically for its bravura stylistic set pieces.

The problematic relationship between the material grounds of American life and the flight into abstraction reappear at a different level when we come to consider the realigned transatlantic cultural field in which Franco-American literary relations were negotiated in the late 1940s. Beauvoir's intellectual reputation in the United States was damaged by the vicious attacks on *America Day by Day* launched by New York intellectuals, such as William Phillips, Mary McCarthy, and William Barrett, who derided her perceived inability to discriminate between a nation constructed of the imagination and the real America, thus refuting the incipient trend toward an American hyperreal that she began to outline in her work. Their hostile re-

ception can in large part be attributed to the disagreements they had with her over her views on American fiction, which had such a formative influence on her understanding of American culture and its material grounds.

Beauvoir's imagined America was conditioned by her reading of the "*grand cinq*" writers whose reputations had risen in Paris during the war years as representing a distinctive American modernism—William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, John Steinbeck, and Erskine Caldwell—writers associated by Parisian intellectuals not only with the proletarian left but also with the idea of an existential encounter with a wild, inhospitable American landscape. Jean-Paul Sartre, in an article written for the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1946, had described how French intellectuals were mesmerized by the various journeys across the land they discovered in the work of the *grand cinq*, "the constant flow of men across a whole continent, the exodus of an entire village to the orchards of California, the hopeless wanderings of the hero in *Light in August*, and of the uprooted people who drifted along at the mercy of the storms in *The 42nd Parallel*."[60] Correspondingly, on her own journey into the American South, Beauvoir announced, "it's the tragic earth described by Faulkner and Caldwell," and asked herself if James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* would "explain the landscape to me or whether those sights are merely concrete illustrations of the heartrending document I'm studying."[61] The important point that Beauvoir made in a 1947 article for the *New York Times* was that such writers had become popular in France during the war years because they were understood to offer an antidote to the more abstract concerns of the French modernist tradition, "bring[ing] into their books life that was still throbbing," while "for writers like Gide, Valéry, Giraudoux literature had become a purely abstract domain."[62] Similarly, Henri Peyre, an émigré academic teaching French literature at Yale University, wrote in that year of how French readers were turning to American literature with a "thrill of discovery after living too long with the rarefied atmosphere of Proust, the effete irony of Maurois."[63] The distinction between French and American literature was couched in terms structured by immanence and abstraction. The American fiction of the 1930s offered a way out of aestheticism into what Beauvoir called the "authentic sense of the function of literature," which was "to describe in dramatic form the relationship of the individual to the world in which he stakes his freedom."[64]

It was with some indignation, then, that Beauvoir learned from the New York intellectuals she met that the writers heralded by Parisians as quintes-

sentially American and as the harbingers of a new literary aesthetic were regarded as embarrassing reminders of the discredited leftist cultural front of the Depression era and "an insult to the country's intelligentsia" (50). She spent several evenings drinking with Dwight Macdonald and the set anchored around Philip Rahv's highbrow journal *Partisan Review*, arguing the merits of Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle* and Hammett's hardboiled crime fiction. The exceptional case of Faulkner notwithstanding, her tastes were deemed unacceptable by the New York intellectuals, who judged Steinbeck a "flat realist" and Hammett simply "barbaric" (41). It was fine to read such trash, she was told, "but we should do this in the same way as we enjoy the Hollywood films that GT [William Phillips] himself enjoys when he is tired—the ones to which no one would think of granting aesthetic value" (63). Beauvoir's encounter with the sudden and dramatic stratification of American taste had been disastrously determined by the time lapse entailed by the transatlantic loop that had found the great American novelists of the 1930s translated into French, read by the Parisian elite during the war, and then returned to their territorial origins in the late 1940s. During the intervening period, the New York intellectuals had developed their own modernist aesthetic protocol that rejected the proletarian and regionalist culture of the American 1930s, along with the associated efforts to establish a democratic consensus on taste.[65] As several scholars have noted, this shift was justified largely through a perceived complicity between the aesthetics of the popular front and the cultural forms being instituted from above in Soviet culture.[66] In their bid for cultural legitimacy in the late 1940s, the New York intellectuals looked to European modernism of the interwar period for their models. As William Barrett makes clear in his account of the intellectual politics of the forties, the *Partisan Review* set established the explicit objective of recreating the era of European high modernism in postwar New York.[67] Simultaneously, then, American cosmopolitan intellectuals looked back to the values of European modernism for their inspiration, just as the existentialists rejected such abstractions in favor of a materialist realism already discredited as mass entertainment in the United States.

Beauvoir was decisively positioned by her American detractors as a naïve outsider compromised by leftist propaganda, making judgments about the United States that she could not possibly be qualified to make. Thus, William Phillips described *America Day by Day* as a "literal-minded fantasy, with just enough semblance of reality to make America seem like a lost planet, recently discovered, a little like earth, but with its own strange

ways."[68] Drawing on similar tropes, Mary McCarthy described Beauvoir as "descend[ing] from the plane as from a space ship, wearing metaphorical goggles," a clear indication that Cold War containment culture and its popular expression through science fiction had found its way into even the most cosmopolitan of intellectual discourses, transforming the arrival of French existentialism into an alien invasion of the US homeland.[69] Indeed, Beauvoir's insistence on the radical difference between Paris and New York was always destined to present a challenge to her larger project of exporting French existentialism to the United States. "Paris has lost its hegemony. I've landed not only in a foreign country but in another world—an autonomous, separate world" (27). This is a dramatic contrast to the odd rhetoric of homeliness that we find in Nabokov's comments about the United States, including his claim in a 1967 interview to be "as American as April in Arizona," and his assertion in 1962 that "I feel intellectually at home in America. It is a second home in the true sense of the word."[70] On one level, Nabokov's enthusiastic Americanism follows quite naturally from his dedication to a Russian liberal tradition, inherited from his father, and his vehement anti-Communism, which, unlike Beauvoir and Sartre's continued commitments to Marxist socialism, coincided comfortably with the dominant currents of early Cold War political culture.[71] Nevertheless, it is striking that both of these comments were made *after* Nabokov had left the United States in 1960 and was, during the final period of his life, living on the top floor of the Montreux Palace Hotel in Switzerland. There was a strong sense for Nabokov that to be American was to be supranational, suggesting that the dialectic we traced earlier in *Lolita*'s characteristic style, which sweeps the concrete phenomena of the road trip up toward a nebulous ideal, is reproduced in global terms, with political geography subsumed by a universalizing set of liberal and aesthetic values, cut loose finally from the American landmass.

In 1939, Sartre's review of the French translation of Nabokov's novel *Otchayanie* (*Despair*, 1934) had criticized the author on the grounds of his deracinated existence, claiming that émigré writers such as Nabokov "do not concern themselves with any society, not even to revolt against it, because they do not belong to any society."[72] Nabokov turned this argument about deracination back on Sartre when he reviewed *La Nausée* for the *New York Times Book Review* ten years later, during the composition of *Lolita*.[73] In this piece, Nabokov held up for mockery the moment in Sartre's novel when an American popular song is heard in a French café. Nabokov relates how Sartre's protagonist Roquentin indulges in an "equivocal moment of clair-

voyance," imagining the song's composition in a New York skyscraper, the scene fleshed out with "local color."[74] The latter phrase, of course, makes the strategic maneuver of tainting Sartre with the provincialism of his favorite American regionalist authors from the 1930s, but Nabokov's coup de grace is to reveal that the song, far from being sung by a negress and performed by a Brooklyn Jew as Roquentin imagines, "in reality is a Sophie Tucker one written by the Canadian Shelton Brooks."[75] This form of criticism is comparable to that leveled by the New York intellectuals at Beauvoir, which accused French existentialists of entertaining exotic, primitive fantasies of the United States as radically alien, when in reality, as Clement Greenberg had pointed out in his 1939 essay, "Avant-garde and Kitsch," mass culture was already global.[76] Sophie Tucker, as Nabokov must have known, was a Russian Jewish émigré to the United States, like his own wife Véra.

The division of culture for Nabokov, as for the New York intellectuals, was a question of hierarchical stratification by universally applicable aesthetic criteria, rather than by nation; the notion of regionalism, whether American, French, or Russian, was itself a symptom of an illegitimate provincialism. This idea is especially evident from his disagreements with Edmund Wilson over the value of William Faulkner, documented in their correspondence from the late 1940s. In Nabokov's letter from November 1948, Faulkner is subjected to a transnational critique that positions him alongside André Malraux, François Mauriac, and "the thousands of stories and novels about downtrodden peasants and fierce *ispravniki* in Russia, or mystical adventures within the *narod*." "Do you not see," he asks Wilson, "that despite the difference in landscape etc. it is essentially Jean Valjean stealing the candlesticks from the good man of God all over again?"[77] This letter, written just as Nabokov turned to *Lolita*'s composition, serves as a clear indication of how the material details of the American landscape had become interchangeable with those of the Russian Steppe and the French provinces, anticipating the reimagined political geography of his 1969 novel *Ada*, in which the nation of Estotiland combines elements of all three. "Isn't Switzerland in Washington State, sort of, *après tout*?" asks Ada in that novel.[78] By the time Nabokov came to write his longest work in the 1960s, the mobile freedom of the American road trip had been extended across national borders to Europe west of the Iron Curtain, including his newly adopted home. "If Europe and America are coming to resemble each other more and more," he noted in an interview given in Montreux in 1964, "why should I

be discouraged?"[79] The encroaching influence of US mass culture on its Cold War allies, deemed a pernicious form of imperialism by some British and French intellectuals, was of little to concern to the Swiss Nabokov, who came to understand not only his fluid transnationalism, but also his tendency to abstract aesthetic purity from a set of fungible "local" details, to be functions of American liberal consumerism. From this perspective, the America of *Lolita*'s road trips represents a pivotal moment in his literary trajectory, at which aesthetic freedom is first located in, and then abstracted from, the miscellaneous jumbles of signs crowding the roadsides of whichever state Humbert happens to be driving through.

5 Saul Steinberg's Vanishing Trick

Modernism, the State, and the Cosmopolitan Intellectual

The work, career, and reception of Saul Steinberg offer a tantalizing opportunity to retell the familiar history of American art after World War II from an uncanny position, both recognizable and strange. Steinberg was closely allied to many of the main players and worked with several key American art institutions at the moment when, to use Serge Guilbaut's famous phrase, "New York stole the idea of modern art from Paris."[1] Aside from his wife, the abstract expressionist Hedda Sterne, Steinberg counted Mark Rothko, Alexander Calder, and Willem de Kooning among his closest friends. His professional relationships with the influential art dealers Betty Parsons and Sidney Janis led him to exhibit with them regularly throughout the postwar years, alongside prominent figures of the American canon such as Jackson Pollock, Hans Hofmann, Robert Rauschenberg, and Jasper Johns. Early in his career, his work was featured at the most important modernist institution of all, the Museum of Modern Art, in the 1946 *Fourteen Americans* show, just as abstract expressionism began to lay claim to the legacy of modernism. His champions among art historians and critics included Harold Rosenberg, Arthur C. Danto, and Ernst Gombrich.[2] And yet, as those who have written about him since his death have always felt obliged to note, Steinberg has been passed over by accounts of twentieth-century American art. As in Allen Tate's characterization of Edgar Allan Poe, he sits as a "dejected cousin" at the table of American modernism, present and yet almost invisible: "we may 'place' him but we may not exclude him from our board."[3]

The doubts that persist over Steinberg's legitimacy as an artist would first appear to emerge from his preferred medium, the small-scale line drawing, and from his longstanding association with a different if no less powerful metropolitan cultural institution, the *New Yorker* magazine.[4] These two aspects of his career permitted Saul Steinberg to reach an audience and a

level of financial security unattainable by his abstract expressionist friends, and it also consigned him to a marginal status within what we can now understand as the most influential tradition of modernist art criticism in the United States, that established by Clement Greenberg. Greenberg wrote a short review of MoMA's *Fourteen Americans* show in which he admitted that Steinberg's drawings were "surprisingly strong on their own terms," and yet he went on to remark that "the inclusion of Steinberg, good as he is in his limited way, seems almost a last-minute gesture of despair: for even if he were much better, he would still be relatively unimportant in terms of modern art."[5] Seven years earlier, in his essay "Avant-garde and Kitsch," Greenberg had reserved special vitriol for the *New Yorker*, describing it as "fundamentally high-class kitsch for the luxury trade," a parasite on legitimate high culture, the achievements of which it "converts and waters down."[6] Even if his cultural capital was to increase later in his career, particularly after the establishment of pop art in the 1960s conferred retrospective legitimacy upon his use of popular iconography, the contours of Steinberg's relationship to the canon of American modernism's heroic narrative in the 1940s and 1950s can be understood as set by these perceived obstacles of medium and institution.

As I have argued in relation to George Grosz's transatlantic career, however, to satisfy ourselves with an account organized around the binary of success and failure, or indeed of modernism and its mass cultural other, is to reproduce a reified vision of the midcentury aesthetic landscape that is incapable of doing justice to the richness of exilic negotiations with a complex and shifting cultural field. In several senses, Steinberg's career in the 1940s and 1950s resembles what Grosz had desired ten years previously, since its most prominent features included a close relationship with a respectable mass-produced magazine, a reputation for ironic engagement with the aesthetics of American national identity, and relative anonymity within the increasingly hollow institutions of modernism in the United States. Grosz, we might remember, consciously performed the role of average Joe, the Yankee from Berlin, in an attempt to achieve cultural invisibility and evade identification with his elitist émigré peers. Steinberg adopted a comparable strategy in his own artistic life by cultivating a deep skepticism over the institutionalization of abstract painting by museums and critics, and evolving his own distinctive aesthetic protocol in dialectic relationship with the categorizing impulses of the era. "I don't quite belong in the art,

cartoon or magazine world," he once explained in an interview, "so the art world doesn't quite know where to place me."[7] My task in this chapter is to examine how Steinberg hid in plain sight among the modernists of mid-century New York and to ask what kind of value might be attributed to such a performance. I call this Steinberg's vanishing trick, in the sense that he was interested in becoming both present and invisible.

In order to accomplish this task, it is necessary to address the way in which the geopolitical upheavals and realignments of World War II affected the US cultural field in the Cold War. This means returning to the cultural field *as space* and reconsidering Steinberg's remarks about where he might be "placed." As we noted in reading the road narratives of Nabokov and Beauvoir in the previous chapter, highbrow cultural discourse in the early years of the Cold War tended to affirm the space of the state's territorial configuration while simultaneously universalizing cultural values, emptying them of localized forms of knowledge and geographical singularities. The intellectuals who instituted the regime of cultural stratification did so in such a way as to obscure the location from which they spoke, a practice of what Matthew Sparke calls "an *anemic geography*: a geography that, like white chalk on slate, conceals the complex geographical palimpsest over which it writes a singular and supposedly coherent geo."[8] In Greenberg's criticism, as in Nabokov's discussions of regionalism, cultural authority is enunciated from a position that is both nowhere and yet also the center of the new American *imperium*, a position from which relative space might be articulated as absolute. This strategy of spatial maneuver and concealment defines an attitude of Cold War cosmopolitanism that Steinberg was willing to assume when it was advantageous to him. His remarkable life, which saw him raised as a Romanian Jew, educated as an architect in Milan, and become famous as an artist for the *New Yorker*, lent him a fluent cosmopolitan authority that could ultimately be claimed by and for the United States.[9] "The entire world is a garden," he said in 1951 of his adopted country, "one enjoys it at certain times but one comes into the house at night or when it rains."[10] In the security of the house, however, Steinberg was able in his artistic practice to offer a series of antidotes to anemic geography and satires of the cultural Cold War it authorized. His drawings consistently staged the collision of absolute and relative space in ways that criticize cultural cosmopolitanism from a position of complicity and show how, as Costas Douzinas writes, "Throughout history, every *cosmos* has been enunciated

from a specific *pol*itical location; only particulars can pronounce the universal, which tends to be aloof and speechless."[11]

In tracing Steinberg's negotiation of the cultural field, then, I pay attention as much to the treatment of space in his drawings as to his own transnational trajectories. The focus is necessarily limited, however, to the years 1943 to 1958, from his early American drawings to his giant collage created for the US pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair. I choose this period despite and in some senses because it appears to bear less formal ambition than his later career, a phase preceding the increased experimentalism and recognition of the 1960s and 1970s, when he became more accepted as a legitimate if marginal artist.[12] In 1969, John Ashbery looked back on this apparent transition as one in which "Steinberg's genius . . . over his and everyone else's protestations, gently but firmly transformed his inspired doodles into art."[13] In examining the early phase of his US oeuvre, we can observe this almost lepidopteran metamorphosis in parallel to the corresponding phase of the cultural Cold War, from its institutionalization of elite high modernism through to the doubts and anxieties of the late 1950s, when consensus over its conduct began to break down. Steinberg's art in this period, which constantly worried at the question of how to represent a state on a page, was part of a larger conversation in which the intellectual labor of cultural criticism, of establishing hierarchies of taste, and of producing aesthetic theory was itself a way of representing the United States in relation to the rest of the world.

Modernism, the Grid, and the Postwar Cultural Field

I want to begin with two scenes from New York in the fall of 1945. In the first, described by the *Partisan Review* editor William Barrett in his memoirs, the Italian émigré intellectual Nicola Chiaromonte is holding a party at his apartment. His friends Saul Steinberg, Ugo Stille, and Niccolò Tucci are there, along with various New York intellectuals. The conversation turns to the recently concluded war in Europe, in which several of the guests, their friends, and family members had served: "the whole war seemed to collapse into a swarm of amusing stories about Americans and Italians confronting each other in comic and pathetic misunderstanding."[14] This moment is emblematic of the elite cultural networks that formed in New York during the decade or so after totalitarian regimes established themselves throughout Europe in the mid-1930s, a period of transnational rapprochement staged

in counterpoint to the violence and division experienced on the other side of the Atlantic. The war exists in such indigestible proximity—in time if not space—that it cannot be seen whole, only evoked through anecdotal experience. We might suppose that Steinberg, who was by all accounts an entertaining anecdotalist, was one of those amusing the party, for he had had an extraordinary war. Recruited by William "Wild Bill" Donovan for covert propaganda operations shortly following his arrival in the United States in 1942, Steinberg had been posted in numerous locations throughout the world, including China, India, North Africa, and Italy. What makes Barrett's recollection interesting, however, are the comments that Steinberg offered to him when they met by chance many years later and recalled the euphoria of that party: "There was something else there too. Something else beneath all our big ideas. It was the simple feeling that we had survived."[15] Steinberg's postwar career was so prodigious and varied that we are not accustomed to considering him as a "survivor." In the light of his playful visual imagination, we are liable to forget his incarceration in an Italian internment camp in 1941, his extensive wartime service, the scars left by his witnessing the destruction of Italy in 1944, and his anxious haunting by the Holocaust. Though he returned to Europe to witness the Nuremberg Trials in 1947, it was an experience he was reluctant to discuss. Later in life he admitted to his friend Aldo Buzzi that he had avoided reading Hannah Arendt's book *Eichmann in Jerusalem* because "I was afraid of the strong emotions and the obligatory suffering. I had a horror of finding myself in the victim's role once again."[16] Steinberg's words are a necessary reminder of how the experience of war underpinned his intellectual life and those of his émigré peers. But there is a positive dimension, too, in his evocation of communal survival, a sense shared by the intellectuals with whom he socialized that, in Delmore Schwartz's words, New York had become "the last outpost of Europe," a utopian transnational space between the United States and the Atlantic in which, pace Adorno, an authentic culture might emerge from barbarism and take root in a new location.[17]

The second scene: Steinberg writing, in the 50th Street apartment he shared with Hedda Sterne, a letter to his Italian friend Aldo Buzzi. He begins with the observation, "Here there's a lot of activity, reconversion and a return to normal in grand style. A real 'postwar' is in sight. Plenty of inflation in art and literature."[18] This letter introduces what became a consistent theme for Steinberg throughout his career: his acute awareness of how New

York cultural institutions created the conditions under which modern art was created, judged, and consumed. In a direct echo of Grosz's metaphor of the émigré artist setting up a stall at the fair, Steinberg continues:

> The museums are crowded like the fun section at a fair, theaters and concert halls sell tickets at black market prices. The quality isn't very high but there's vitality and a hope for something better. The most acclaimed painters are the European abstractionists, a few good and most of them fake.
>
> Mondrian, who died a year or two ago, has had a big post mortem exhibition and much publicity. He's quite in vogue right now.

The Mondrian Memorial Exhibition opened on March 20, 1945, at the Museum of Modern Art and effectively established Mondrian's reputation as the patron saint of modernism, the vital connection between the European tradition and New York, where he spent his final years. As MoMA's director Alfred H. Barr proclaimed at Mondrian's memorial service, he "gave his life to his art more completely than any artist I know of."[19] Yet Mondrian's assimilation into the New York artistic establishment is understood ambivalently by Steinberg both as a sign of the frenzied commercialization of European abstract art and as the glimmer of the utopian hope we discerned in his comments to Barrett. As we will see, Mondrian remained an important point of reference for Steinberg throughout his career, and his subsumption by the high art institutions still rankled as late as 1968, when he composed *Luna Park* (plate 4), a work in which Mondrian, Kierkegaard, and Rimbaud are to be found hawking themselves as circus acts. *Luna Park* thus rehearses closely George Grosz's comparison between the postwar art world and a fairground.[20] It is worth noting, however, that whatever doubts Steinberg had over MoMA's role in determining cultural legitimacy, he was to exhibit his own drawings at the museum the following year in the *Fourteen Americans* show, demonstrating the complicity with institutional power that was to define his career.

We gain a clearer sense of Steinberg's self-positioning in the conclusion to his letter to Buzzi. "In my unbiased opinion, I think the only thing good here, honest and genuine, is the cartoon, the humorous drawing." This statement serves as an explicit reminder to scholars of Steinberg's work that if his preferred medium originated in the need to earn money as an architecture student in Milan in the 1930s, it became in the United States part of a calculated strategy for negotiating the cultural field. He understood the medium of the cartoon or humorous drawing as shielding its artist from the

wave of publicity and boosterism that swept "Cultureburg" in the immediate postwar, as New York sought to establish itself as the new center and authority for the modern art world.[21] We have seen how Raymond Chandler, in the 1930s, had found in the pulp detective genre a comparable immunity from the demands either for intellectual posturing or proletarian realism. In the same decade, Grosz had turned away from Dada toward popular realism in response to the institutionalization of the avant-garde. In a similar way, even while abstract expressionism was enshrined as the aesthetic representation of existential freedom, Steinberg found in humorous drawings more practical, if covert, forms of experimental autonomy. In this case, his work for the *New Yorker* and other magazines provided him with a more transparent relationship to the cultural marketplace than the complex system of patronage that obtained in the world of painting.

Steinberg's first years in the United States coincided with a desperate and at times brutal war for position within a fluid and unstable cultural field, in which it was not yet clear which aesthetic regime might emerge with the greatest claim to legitimacy. This confusion was visible in many of the critical responses to Steinberg's work at the time. Howard Devree in the *New York Times* decided to mitigate against the risk of an egregious error in taste formation by equivocating. "'Is it art?' Yes. No. Anyway, it's funny and we like it."[22] For a brief moment, of which our two 1945 scenes are symptomatic, it seemed possible that the cartoon might provide a way of resolving some of the formal problems presenting themselves. It might, for instance, be claimed that the cartoon form had the flexibility to develop the legacy of Joan Miró and Paul Klee while remaining faithful to what was popularly perceived as a classically American form. Thomas Craven, who had championed Grosz after his immigration ten years earlier, argued in his 1943 book *Cartoon Cavalcade* that the *New Yorker* cartoon represented the latest evolution of a humorous American tradition reaching back from James Thurber to Thomas Benton and then Mark Twain.[23] In the same year, Clement Greenberg had reviewed cautiously but approvingly William Steig's collection of drawings, *The Lonely Ones*, which had been published by the firm that would bring out Steinberg's first book, *All in Line*, in 1945. He noted how Steig appeared to be making a bid for the status of the cartoon as legitimate art. "For what he is, Steig is certainly very good, but I am not sure that he is satisfied to be taken just for what he is. He is after a new genre in these psychographs, a new combination of literature and picture, and he does well enough to be judged by severe standards."[24]

"A new combination of literature and picture" sounds like a fair description of the experimental ambitions of the young Steinberg, and it was likely this sense of formal possibility that led to his inclusion in the *Fourteen Americans* show at MoMA in 1946. By the end of the decade, however, it had become clear that the war for position in the cultural field had concluded with a victory for abstract painting and a period of consolidation. One of the clearest indications of this settling of accounts was the publication of a pair of articles by Russell Lynes for *Harper's Magazine* in 1947 and 1949, both accompanied by Steinberg drawings. The first, entitled "The Taste-Makers," provided an astute survey and breezy critique of the newly established "art boom" in New York, led by self-appointed cultural guardians, "a well-trained (if not well-disciplined) band of zealots who have constituted themselves as a sort of Salvation Army of our sensibilities."[25] What the magazine titled Steinberg's "pictorial comment" was a series of drawings depicting taste itself in the process of being formed, practiced, and institutionalized. In the most interesting of these (figure 7), a dense crowd of faces stare blankly at a series of abstract figures hung in a museum or gallery. While this theme of popular incomprehension of abstract art had been popular among satirical cartoonists for some time, for example, in *Americana* magazine, the anarchic energy of Steinberg's lines achieves the effect of rendering the viewers themselves formal echoes of the works on display. In some cases, the hairstyling of the women is indistinguishable from the abstract style of the artworks. In this sense, Steinberg played out the worst fears of abstract painting in the 1940s—that it should become mere decoration.

The second article by Lynes was to become one of the classic accounts of cultural stratification at midcentury. "Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow" marked the acceptance of the New York intellectuals as figures of cultural authority, as well as their vulnerability to satire, responding directly to the influence of such articles as Greenberg's "Avant-garde and Kitsch" (1939) and Macdonald's "A Theory of Popular Culture" in the inaugural edition of *Politics* in 1944.[26] Lynes's approach was to organize his map of the cultural hierarchy through attention not to the essential qualities of particular artists, writers, or thinkers but to the construction and display of aesthetic taste by particular social groups. Steinberg's accompanying drawing (figure 8) once again drew attention to the sense in which high art could be assumed as decoration, the torch of illumination transformed for the middlebrow into a decorative lamp for a bourgeois apartment.

Steinberg later described this postwar moment in US cultural history as

Figure 7. Saul Steinberg, Untitled. Published in Russell Lynes, "The Tastemakers," *Harper's Magazine* 194, no. 1165 (June 1947): 483. Whereabouts unknown. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

one at which, just as "news is caused by journalists," so "art was caused to happen by museums."[27] This dialectical aphorism, which would not be out of place in Adorno's *Minima Moralia*, represents one of the keys to understanding his practice. Whereas Adorno's response to this situation was the prescription of ascetic retreat from the culture industry, Steinberg's solution was to cultivate an intensely reflexive aesthetic that incorporated the institutionalizing practices of taste formation and performance themselves into both the style and matter of his work. In this way, one of his most distinctive aesthetic strategies comes into view: the reframing of abstraction in the realm of figurative representation. This strategy had the effect of conveying a facility with the theory and practice of modernist painting while also

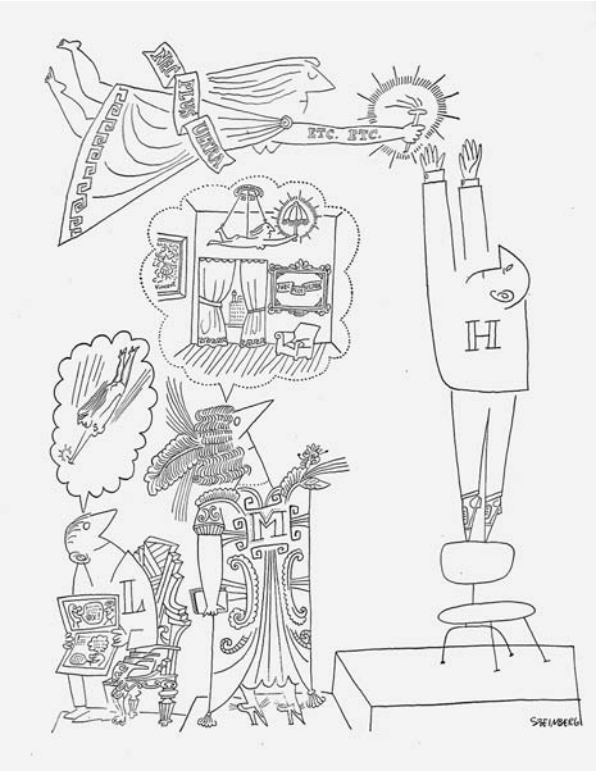

Figure 8. Saul Steinberg, Untitled. Published in Russell Lynes, "Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow," *Harper's Magazine* 198, no. 1185 (February 1949): 24. Private Collection. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

maintaining an ironic distance from it. Even more importantly, it permitted the middle-class readers of slick magazines the luxury of gentle self-criticism.

The solution was so successful that it became possible for Steinberg to create an illusion of privileged independence from the cultural field altogether, when, in fact, it only tied him closer to certain other institutions in the publishing world: *Harper's Magazine*, *Time*, and above all the *New Yorker.* These magazines constructed and marketed such a position of autonomy and critical independence to advertisers as a disposition of cultural sophistication, a commercially desirable quality that entailed a detached facility with all strata of culture alongside a refusal to accept the categories themselves as absolute. A marketing pamphlet produced by the *New Yorker* in

1946 made the claim that its subscribers were "at least all of the following: Intelligent, well-educated, discriminating, well-informed, unprejudiced, public-spirited, metropolitan-minded, broad-visioned and quietly liberal."[28] The term *sophisticated* is likely absent here because it had in this period taken on pejorative connotations for intellectuals critical of the *New Yorker*'s tendency to bring commerce and *Kultur* into apparently peaceful cohabitation among its pages.[29] Nevertheless, the language of the pamphlet and, especially, its gestures toward accumulated cultural capital and discrete cosmopolitanism speak to the magazine's unwavering loyalty to Steinberg, whose developing style conformed so precisely to its projected image, tacitly assuming familiarity with a common set of broadly spaced cultural coordinates that he described in 1952 as "the alphabet invented by the moderns."[30]

One such convention, which Steinberg addressed regularly throughout his oeuvre, was the grid. Following Rosalind Krauss's brilliant 1979 essay on the subject, the grid has been associated with a particular canonical enunciation of modernist values, focused on "modern art's will to silence, its hostility to literature, to narrative, to discourse."[31] The tracing of Steinberg's grids, from the drawings of his early career to his architectural satires and beyond, takes us some way toward understanding his relationship to modernist aesthetics and the cultural field more generally. If Krauss reads the grid as a formal device that "states the autonomy of the realm of art" and "crowd[s] out the dimensions of the real," then Steinberg's grids return those components of the real to the work and thus make abstraction itself the object of interrogation.[32] In his work, the grid becomes more than a method for organizing the visual field—it is also recognized as a form of spatial discipline with concrete social effects. This attitude to the grid is in evidence even in Steinberg's earliest humorous drawings. In one drawing (figure 9), it is figured as a sales chart, through which a line descends before exceeding its boundaries and breaking violently a path through the floor. Like so many of Steinberg's drawings from this period, its humor derives from the way in which his line breaks out of the confines imposed on it by convention and unexpectedly takes on some other representative function. Not only does the drawing indicate a covert identity shared between the aesthetic grid and the world of business that abstraction claims to exclude, but it also performs the cartoonist's line, errant and irascible, refusing to pay allegiance to either.

Five years earlier, in his essay "Towards a Newer Laocoon," Greenberg had composed the first formulation of what would become the defining

Figure 9. Saul Steinberg, Untitled. Published in *All in Line* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pierce, 1945). Whereabouts unknown. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

argument of his career and established a set of concerns for the next generation of modernist art critics to navigate, including Michael Fried and Rosalind Krauss.[33] Greenberg claimed that the logic of the avant-garde across all the arts had been established as demanding "purity and the radical delimitation of their fields of enquiry," leading to the conclusion that "the purely abstract or plastic qualities of the work of art are the only ones that count."[34] Seen in this context, Steinberg's drawing appears willfully heretical in a sense that was to recur throughout the 1940s and 1950s, as Greenberg's authority as theorist for the New York avant-garde grew steadily. Tom Wolfe's coruscating history of the New York art world in *The Painted Word* later testified to the aura of unshakeable moral authority that came with these pronouncements. "When Greenberg spoke, it was as if not merely the future of Art were at stake but the very quality, the very *possibility*, of civilization in America."[35] But Steinberg's drawings internalized the rhetorical excesses of art theory and deliberately turned them on their head, in a trav-

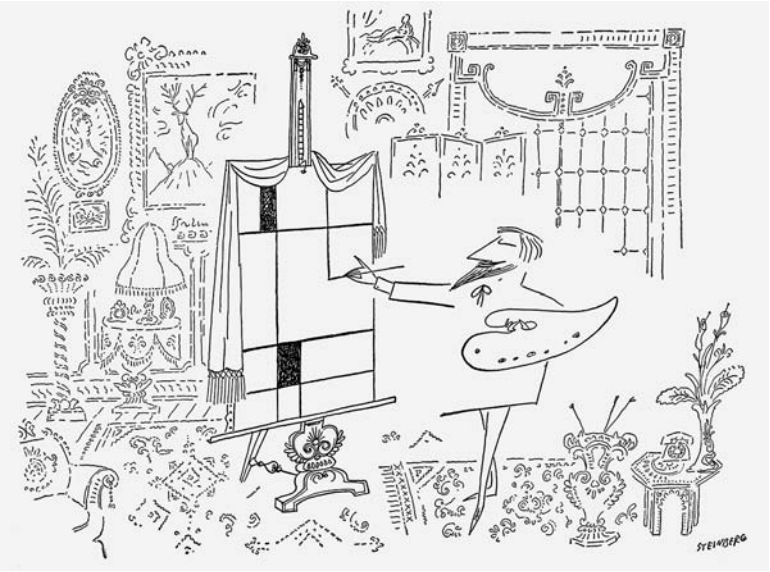

Figure 10. Saul Steinberg, Untitled. Published in the *New Yorker*, November 1, 1952, 23. Private collection. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

esty of their Eliotic high-cultural pretensions. When the logic of modernism in the visual arts was revealed as the impulse toward media-specific purity or, in Michael Fried's rapturous prose, "space experienced in sheerly visual terms," Steinberg foregrounded the interactions between abstraction and language, and began to describe himself as more of a writer than a visual artist.[36] When the avant-garde was defined as a defense against the incursions of bourgeois kitsch, Steinberg perversely staged their mutual relation, as in his drawing of Mondrian as a romantic aesthete painting his grids in a baroque interior (figure 10). And when the achievement of a painting was measured by its ability to collapse the distinction between the absolute space of the image's surface and the space it represented to the mind, Steinberg consistently sought opportunities to stage dissonant encounters between the two.

With such habits in mind, we can return to another of Steinberg's uses of the grid, his experiments with graph paper in the late 1940s and early 1950s. These works form part of a larger development in this period, in which he incorporated found objects into his drawings and photographs as

a way of playing with scale and metonymy. In one direction this technique produced a series of architecturally themed works in which refuse objects and microcosmic decay in the built environment are made to resemble larger urban landscapes.[37] In another, Steinberg systematically explored the formal possibilities offered by using graph paper as the material upon which to draw. In these drawings, the world is always already organized by the grid, which evolves its own concrete power by imprisoning its inhabitants rather than, as in Krauss's account of the aesthetic philosophy of Mondrian and Malevich, providing a "staircase to the universal."[38] The cat, Steinberg's comic symbol of benign creative curiosity, is found clinging to the bars of its cage and peering back with a look of betrayal at the artist (figure 11). There is an echo here of Nabokov's myth of inspiration for *Lolita*, which was being composed at the time Steinberg experimented with the grid as prison. In "On a Book Entitled *Lolita*," Nabokov wrote of how he experienced "the first little throb" of his novel after reading of an experiment in which an ape in the Jardin des Plantes was given charcoal and paper, only to watch as it drew the bars of its own cage.[39] Similarly, for Steinberg the grid serves to impose relative *distance* between the artist and the world rather than to promise immediacy, immanence, or plenitude. One of the key moments in Krauss's essay is her discussion of the bivalent structure of the grid in terms of whether it should be understood as centrifugally gesturing outward, "compelling our acknowledgement of a world beyond the frame," or centripetally internalizing the world.[40] While both options conform nevertheless to the essential flatness dictated by modernist art criticism, Steinberg's graph paper grids invite an act of thought to reconfigure their paradoxes, a dialectical movement between subject and object, which he conceived of as a spiral breaking out of two dimensions into three. "I consider this evolution more like a spiral that . . . goes in three dimensions. It starts and it keeps going, going, going. As you go up the circle becomes more and more restricted, smaller but higher. The difference is the difference of altitude, of height."[41] This cerebral process is what lay behind Steinberg's later self-identification as a "writer who can't write" in contrast to the more instinctive, visceral performances of his abstract expressionist peers.[42]

The most important of Steinberg's grids from this period are those that combine his interest in architecture and urban planning with his graph paper experiments. In addition to his association with various abstract expressionists, Steinberg was also involved with a group of transatlantic, modernist architects, including Marcel Breuer, Walter Gropius, and Le Corbus-

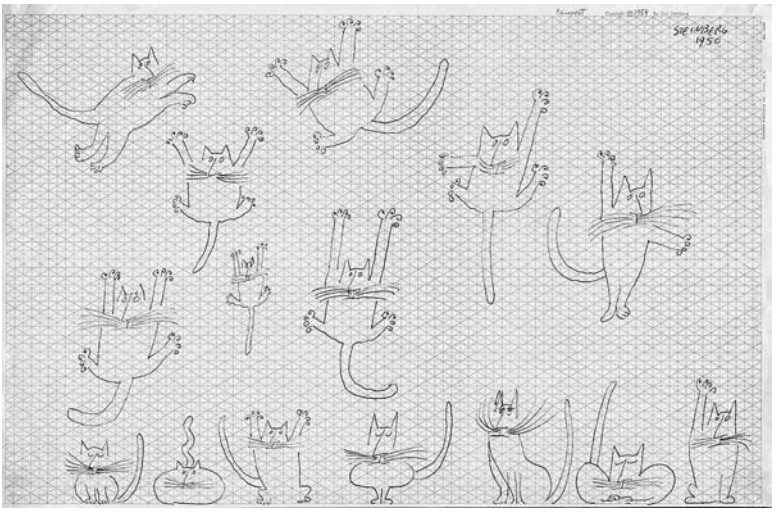

Figure 11. Saul Steinberg, Untitled, 1950. Ink on graph paper, 11 3/4 × 17 7/8 in. Saul Steinberg Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, inv. 1311. A very similar version of this drawing was published in *The Passport* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954). © The Saul Steinberg Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

ier.[43] They provide an interesting contrast to the canonization of autonomous painting and media specificity among American art critics because as a group they were still committed to a utopian vision of modernism as an overcoming of differences between various branches of culture and indeed as an agent of social reorganization. Nevertheless, Steinberg criticized several elements of the international movement in modernist architecture, and he used the spatial regime of the grid as a language for doing so. The first indication came with the drawing he made to accompany the *New Yorker*'s profile of Le Corbusier in May 1947, his earliest published example of a graph paper composition.[44] Le Corbusier was at this time much in the spotlight, having arrived in Manhattan for the first time and judged the city's skyscrapers, notoriously, as too small. Le Corbusier represented the height of European cultural prestige passing judgment on the achievements of the New World. If Sigfried Giedion's commentary on the intellectual migration of European architects in the 1930 and 1940s was indicative, the United States should have been humbled and grateful for his presence: "There are moments in the lives of nations when, like certain plants, they require ex-

traneous fertilization in order to achieve a further phase of their cultural evolution."[45] Le Corbusier, Gropius, and others, Giedion was suggesting, would help the United States, "after a preponderant role of business," to achieve "a new spiritual orientation."[46] The physical emblem of this hope was to be the construction of the United Nations headquarters on the East River in Manhattan, in the design of which Le Corbusier played an important role. Steinberg's drawing (figure 12), much reduced and tucked into the upper left corner of the profile's first page, represented the great architect sitting at a table, pen in hand. Steinberg's joke is that although the graph paper on which he drew was also architectural paper of the sort Le Corbusier himself might use, Steinberg's own orientation in space perverted the homogenous discipline of the page, the "regulating lines" about which the architect rhapsodizes in *Towards an Architecture*.[47] Steinberg's north arrow veers across the axes of the paper and introduces relativity into the absolute space of the grid. The interference created by this small gesture analogizes Steinberg's own oblique position in relation to the cultural field, an intention not only to estrange legitimate positions by introducing variant perspectives but also to disrupt the very working of the field by acts of subtle disorientation that might throw others off course.

Steinberg's reservations about the international modernist style in architecture became more apparent, however, in 1953, following its celebration by the Museum of Modern Art in the "Built in U.S.A." exhibition. He wrote about the show in his datebook for that year, noting that "the main qualities of men like Le Corbusier and Fr. Lloyd Wright is their fantasy—articulate, aware," but also observing that it was "a generation swept by the desire to shock."[48] His response led him to review the exhibition for *ARTnews*, and the resulting piece is unusual in the way it combines his own written and visual commentaries. His main criticism was of how the curators had selected "a few handsome works from a field of nonsense" and therefore had not represented the greater problems facing American architecture.[49] While Steinberg's visual and textual criticisms in this review tell us important things about his developing relationship to urban planning and the geography of the United States, for now I want to draw out his barbed allusions to the UN headquarters, which was at that point under construction on 42nd Street, twenty-nine blocks south of his Upper East Side apartment. "Which function for what form?" he asked rhetorically of a photograph showing a Brazilian water tower clad with pierced concrete walls forming a grid pattern. "Built before 1943, its design appears to have influenced the U.N. building."[50] These

Figure 12. Saul Steinberg, Untitled [Le Corbusier]. Published in the *New Yorker*, May 3, 1947, 36. Whereabouts unknown. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

remarks, clearly directed at Bauhaus and Le Corbusier, respectively, form an unofficial caption for Steinberg's *Graph-paper Architecture* (plate 5), one of six similar drawings he made in 1950 and 1954. Here, the abstraction of the grid is coerced into taking on the work of figurative representation, the building it represents becoming both the UN headquarters and any modernist building. Sibyl Maholy-Nagy, reviewing *The Passport* for *Progressive Architecture*, made particular mention of the graph-paper skyscraper, "the UN building (a mere piece of lined paper, two-dimensional, precise and empty)."[51] Stripped of the fantasy that constituted Le Corbusier's "main quality," the UN headquarters' symbolic associations with cosmopolitanism, peace, and futurity are revealed as hollow abstractions imposed on the world, and the building itself becomes blankly threatening as the grid yields up its meaning as authority and power.[52]

The graph-paper skyscraper is an important work in Steinberg's oeuvre because of the way it crystallizes the sense in which he understood the

formal qualities of high modernist abstraction to be part of the American vernacular language of urban space. In his memoir, *Reflections and Shadows*, Steinberg wrote explicitly of his recognition, on arrival in New York, of cubism in the design of taxis and art deco buildings.[53] Much of the pleasure his work has brought to its large audiences comes from the playful quality with which New York is understood as *already art.* Viewers are given entry to a virtual aesthetic playground in which New York is intelligible as a set of art-historical and spatial styles, requiring only Steinberg's hyperbole and orchestration to create the potential for recognizing unforeseen comic relationships and dissonance. This, for example, is the logic behind his sets of couples and families in which each individual is drawn using a different style—cubist, popular cartoon style, impressionist, and so on.[54] In the graph-paper skyscraper, however, as in much of his most powerful work, the question of aesthetic style takes on a political valence at the moment it is recognized as also being a way of organizing lived space in the city. Here, the grid of the skyscraper emerges as something like a master form for New York City more generally and, in particular, its urban plan.

Rem Koolhaas, an émigré architect of a later generation, has argued that the grid plan is what facilitated "Manhattanism," defined as "a collective experiment in which the entire city became a factory of man-made experience, where the real and the natural cease to exist."[55] Koolhaas's vision of New York aligns closely with Steinberg's in its total relinquishment of nature as meaningful category and its resultant redefinition of the real as a quality of internal relations between different orders of representation. Koolhaas argues that the grid is, "above all, a conceptual speculation. In spite of its apparent neutrality, it implies an intellectual program for the island: in its indifference to topography, to what exists, it claims the superiority of mental construction over reality."[56] Steinberg's 1953 review of "Built in U.S.A." lists "city planning made to impress airplane passengers" as an element of the postwar architectural "crime wave," an allusion that points not only to Le Corbusier but also to a figure he greatly influenced, New York's own planning demiurge, Robert Moses.[57] Moses was at this early postwar moment the great personification of New York's global ambitions, having been appointed chair in 1946 of the hubristically named "Mayor's Committee for Permanent World Capitol," which achieved its ambition of persuading the UN to locate its headquarters in the city.[58] The early 1950s, however, saw the beginnings of a change of fortune for Moses, when several planning submissions for the transformation of SoHo, the South Village, and

Washington Square into urban superblocks were withdrawn following public protest by a group of Greenwich Village mothers, preparing the way for what became by the end of the decade a full-scale assault on his entire planning ethos.[59] Steinberg's criticism of city planning as "made to impress airplane passengers" resonates with a growing public dissatisfaction with Moses's authoritarian approach and with his notorious indifference to the deeply rooted and concrete relationships that New Yorkers had with their lived environment. It emphasizes once again Steinberg's desire to relativize the illusion of absolute space projected by power, by insisting on its contingent viewpoint.[60]

This encounter between the lived space of the city and the aestheticized view from above takes place on the formal terrain of Steinberg's grids, which, once lodged in the mind of the observer, seem to reveal themselves everywhere in his urban landscapes. In 1953–54, he produced several drawings representing crossroads filled with traffic and anonymous pedestrians, viewed either from the ground or from a slightly elevated perspective, which are organized around a tension between the drive toward abstract order and the experience of chaos (see plate 6a). In the later fifties, the same locations would be depicted as if seen from an airplane or skyscraper (see figure 13). The intersection of roads continued to be his most favored subject in drawings representing American space right through to the 1970s and 80s, when his menacingly empty streetscapes were prowled by grotesque violent cartoon creatures (see plate 6b). Steinberg's grids consistently evoke and then frustrate the drive toward transcendence evident in Giedion's "spiritual orientation" of modernism in the United States. They are always in the process of assuming dystopian social content, of transforming New York and the United States from aesthetic playground to lived authoritarian nightmare. They are the great urban spectacles in which the last vestiges of a utopian modernist project are still to be discerned, hiding in plain sight. As Perry Miller had noted in 1951, the poles of Utopia and apocalypse had always structured US mythology.[61] Steinberg's grids show how one becomes recognized as the other.

If we return to thinking about Steinberg's relationship to Mondrian in the light of his lifelong use of the grid, then we might catch a fresh glimpse of modernism itself in its postwar guise. Despite the irony and bantering wit that appropriates the grid for sales charts and zoo cages, we need to credit Steinberg's statement that the Dutch painter was the "key to modern art . . . the true intellect—the purest."[62] Mondrian's essay "Liberation and Oppression in Art and Life," begun in London in 1939 and completed in New York

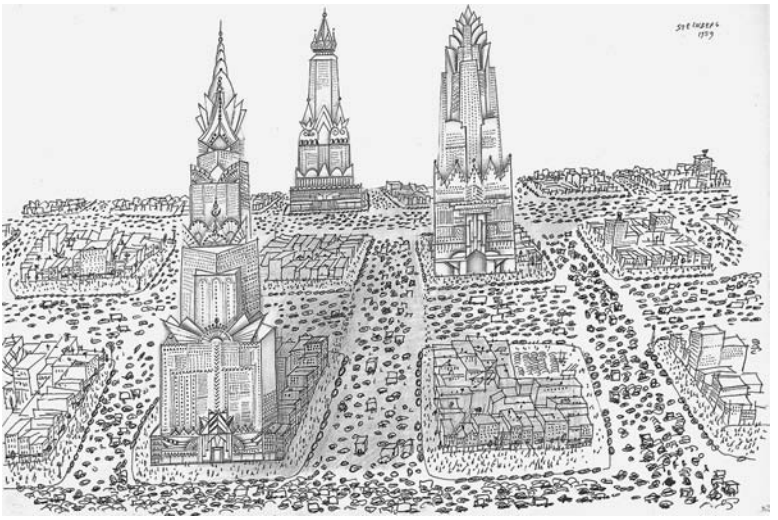

Figure 13. Saul Steinberg, *Three Middle West Skyscrapers*, 1959. Ink, pencil, and colored pencil on board, 19 7/8 × 30 in. Collection of Carol and Douglas Cohen. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

in 1940, reads now like a founding document of the cultural Cold War, with its explicit analogy between the dialectic of freedom and limitation in painting, and the Allied struggle against totalitarianism in World War II. "They develop together," he wrote, "until the oppression of limited form is ended."[63] Mondrian sets out here an immensely positive vision for the future of abstract painting in its inexorable movement toward freedom and implies through his analogy that the victory of the Allies is just as necessary. New York's particular sense of rhythm, "marvelously determined and full of vitality . . . expressed in real jazz, swing, and Boogie-Woogie music and dance," makes it the ideal place in which artistic culture, as "the continual search for freedom," can flourish.[64] Steinberg likely read this essay in 1945, when it was included in the first English translation of Mondrian's collected prose, *Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art*, published to coincide with the MoMA memorial exhibition he wrote to Buzzi about. By that time, he had seen enough to recognize Mondrian's utopian vision of modernist transcendence in exile as beautiful and precious but untenable. Although we may recognize something of Mondrian's dialectical formal oppositions in Steinberg, they are robbed of their grand historical teleology.

The Uses of Cosmopolitanism

Steinberg's relentless and critical materialization of the abstract in his engagement with modernism takes on a new, greatly expanded importance when our understanding of his practice takes account of yet another spatial regime, that of geopolitics. The fact of Steinberg's immigration, like Nabokov's, has long been woven into the consideration of his reputation among critics and scholars, even if some, like Joel Smith, have sought to play down its determining significance in the oeuvre.[65] For Steinberg and Nabokov, their success as artists has been popularly conceived as inseparable from their ability to use their European perspective to enact a process of aesthetic estrangement on the familiar icons of the postwar US landscape. In the case of Steinberg, especially, this idea has often been expressed through allusion to the classic colonial settler myth, with the artist playing the role of a culturally sophisticated European discovering virgin territory.

The most detailed use of this mythology was made by the American philosopher and art critic Arthur C. Danto in his introduction to *The Discovery of America* in 1992.

> As a matter of biographical fact, Steinberg, born in Romania, European to the core, was shaken loose from a form of life that was altogether congenial to him by the turbulence of politics and war, and cast ashore in America after a certain number of adventures. This was no desert island, but Steinberg really was a Robinson Crusoe, and he set about exploring this extravagant culture, making a certain number of simple, useful discoveries on his various expeditions by bus, train, and motorcar, learning from the outside what ordinary Americans took for granted as the fabric of their lives. As Steinberg did not come in the service of some latter-day Ferdinand or Isabella, he more or less left things as he found them, simply transcribing them as images. But in this spirit of simple discovery, he saw the most ordinary things as marvelous.[66]

The astonishing evacuation of history from this account of Steinberg's exile is unfortunately symptomatic of a widespread anemia in the criticism more generally, whereby the geographical dislocation that facilitated his extravagant estrangements takes place in a space emptied of all its historical contents, from which World War II, the Cold War, anti-Semitism, and the Holocaust have been banished. Danto's Hegelian-idealist perspective on Steinberg is itself a product of the historical structure it erases—the strategic promotion of the United States in the mid-twentieth century as an ex-

ception in the world history of imperialism and empire, a "virgin land" as Henry Nash Smith called it, a refuge from ideology.[67] Danto's introduction to Steinberg's career echoes Richard Chase's 1957 study *The American Novel and its Tradition*, in which the American tradition distinguishes itself by its principled disengagement from the "imperial enterprise" of the English. "By contrast . . . the American novel has usually seemed content to explore, rather than to appropriate and civilize."[68] American space, blissfully deterritorialized, allows for the benign expansion of the creative mind but not of the *imperium.* This is also the assumption behind Harold Rosenberg's treatment of Steinberg. Rosenberg was Steinberg's most prominent champion in the art world, a personal friend, and probably his most insightful critic. Nevertheless, his description of the artist as a "frontiersman of genre," and his grouping of Steinberg alongside immigrant figures such as Willem de Kooning, Hans Hofmann, and Arshile Gorky as an "artist of self-creation," only reinforces a view of his work that flattens the complex historical geography of the intellectual migration into another version of the settler myth, with the artist as American Adam.[69]

The creation of this bland and bloodless mythology (in which Steinberg himself was often complicit) conceals the close relationship between the artist's aesthetic practice and the idea of the modern nation-state in the 1940s and 1950s. It is easily forgotten that Steinberg's route to citizenship came not through artistic explorations of virgin territory, but through his commission by the US Naval Reserve during World War II, and that his best-known work in the first years after his arrival was completed while serving for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of the CIA, as a propaganda artist in China, North Africa, and Italy. His work for the US government was publicly resumed in 1958, when he was contracted to construct a large mural representing the American people for the US pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair, one of the most transparent propaganda spectacles of the entire Cold War. Yet, his relationship to the US state was difficult to say the least. There are gaps and silences in his known biography, indicated by allusions in his letters. In October 1951, he wrote to Aldo Buzzi from Washington, DC, "they want me back in uniform. I'm putting up a fight," and after the World's Fair he vowed to his friend, "never [again] will I work for governments (except governments in exile)."[70] This oblique parenthesis suggests another way of locating Steinberg's cultural and geographical allegiances, this time outside the rigid system of state-bounded territories envisaged by the Cold War establishment. Far from being "Euro-

pean to the core," as Danto suggests, he described himself as "culturally a born Levantine. My sort of country goes from the eastern outskirts of Milan all the way to Afghanistan."[71]

Steinberg maintained a strong sense of exilic identity, which was nevertheless untethered from the Romanian state in which he had been born, as well as from the Cold War division of East from West. A member of the Jewish diaspora, he had first faced anti-Semitism in childhood, later explaining how he "divorced the whole country when I discovered that I wasn't wanted, when I discovered the anti-Semitism of the Rumanians."[72] In Italy, he had witnessed the onset of Fascist anti-Semitism and been interned temporarily in a concentration camp.[73] While, on one hand, Steinberg owed his material security to the protections offered by US citizenship at the dawn of Luce's "American Century," on the other, he remained profoundly skeptical of the state as a means of organizing culture. Steinberg's artistic practice, in terms of both his institutional affiliations and his aesthetics, developed as a set of negotiated responses to these tensions, which arose out of a broader historical structure created by World War II and Fascist anti-Semitism. Steinberg's affiliation to the United States began at a time when the image of the stateless Jew was resignified from a negative into a newly positive cosmopolitanism.[74] The contradictory allegiances that he felt to the United States and to a transnational diasporic identity raised a particular formal problem with which he grappled throughout much of his career: How do you represent a state on a piece of paper?

During World War II and the Cold War, intellectual cosmopolitanism had its uses. This was how Harold Ross, the *New Yorker*'s editor, conceived of Steinberg's qualities in 1942, as he wrote to Elmer Davis, head of the newly formed Office of War Information.

> There's an artist recently come to this country who might very well be highly useful to your department in its foreign propaganda work, it seems to me. His name is Steinberg . . . He is the ablest and most humorous and satirical artist to appear in this country in the last ten years, and maybe in the last fifty years. I should think he would be perfect in drawing things to stir up unrest in Italy, where he is famous. He knows the country, the people, the language, and is eloquent on paper . . . he speaks six languages and knows the lay thoroughly.[75]

Ultimately, it was not Davis but his rival William Donovan, the father of modern espionage, who recruited Steinberg for work in the OSS through Ross's mediation. What Ross's letter shows, however, is how easily Stein-

berg's cosmopolitanism could be co-opted for national purposes. The branch in which he found himself was Morale Operations (MO), the objective of which was "to incite and spread dissension, confusion and disorder within enemy countries" and to promote "subversive activities against enemy governments."[76] The tactics employed, which were revolutionary at the time but set the pattern for US covert operations at home and abroad for years to come, included among other things the forgery of official papers, blackmail, secret liaison with underground movements, the distribution of faked propaganda via print and radio, and targeted assassinations. From the records available it seems that Steinberg's principal function in the MO, as someone who "knew the lay," was to produce anti-Axis propaganda cartoons, which were to pass as products of homegrown resistance movements in occupied territories.[77] Although one or two of these necessarily crude cartoons have survived, Steinberg also produced a different variety of propaganda while posted in China, India, and North Africa: drawings representing the lives of US soldiers as they encountered the world, which were then sent back to the *New Yorker* and published enthusiastically as part of their contribution to the war effort.[78] To be a US citizen for Steinberg entailed a dizzying series of perspectival and stylistic shifts that drew on his cosmopolitan experience without ever allowing him to rest. The question of how a German resistance fighter might represent Hitler in a propaganda cartoon prepared the ground for another, even more difficult. How might an American represent for the *New Yorker* readership the US army stationed at locations across the world, preparing to take on the mantle of global superpower?

Steinberg's answer to this question is to be found in the extraordinary series of drawings he published in the *New Yorker* in 1944 and 1945, depicting a war emptied of violence, a war of leisure and boredom in exotic lands. US servicemen go shopping, read letters from home, and lounge in hammocks. They drive their vehicles around strange towns and villages, they eat foreign foods, and they smoke. What the drawings represent above all, however, is a benign image of the United States abstracted from its territorial boundaries and regrounded in Europe, Asia, and North Africa. On the rare occasions when these drawings are discussed by critics and scholars, there is no mention of the openly colonial flavor of the encounters depicted, in which American soldiers have their boots shined by Italian children and their bags carried by Indian coolies. One of the great themes of the *New Yorker* articles and advertisements of the 1950s, that of luxury tourism,

is eerily prefigured here in the drawings of Americans shopping for souvenirs, admiring monuments, and taking photographs.[79] In depicting war for the *New Yorker*'s educated and liberal readership as benign colonialism, and empire as tourism, Steinberg confirmed their image of the United States' emerging global identity in a prescient way and greatly satisfied his editor, who worried that the *New Yorker* was being overshadowed by its competitors' war reports. "You may save the day for us, in a big way. The hell with *Life* and the other magazines. I think we can use a great deal of the stuff you send, and be glowingly happy to get it."[80]

Steinberg's wartime drawings, and especially the way in which they anticipate the Cold War fantasy of a benign US presence dispersed across the globe, raise larger questions about the nature of cosmopolitanism which are now being debated across the humanities and social sciences. Discussions of cosmopolitanism currently serve as the arena in which the most utopian hopes and darkest fears for human culture and its study in the age of globalization are articulated and challenged. While contemporary thinkers such as Martha Nussbaum and Kwame Anthony Appiah have proposed influential models of cosmopolitanism as a liberal, ethical position toward globalization, there remains an unexorcized fear haunting the study of cosmopolitanism that the term serves simply as a way of concealing and justifying imperialist processes and ideologies. Steinberg's example would appear, then, to provide an interesting example of how the ability to cultivate aesthetic detachment can be recruited to serve particular interests or, as Timothy Brennan puts it, how cosmopolitanism's "covert appeal is most powerful when, in a double displacement, its political sense is expressed in cultural forms."[81] If we understand Steinberg's cosmopolitan identity as Ross did, in terms of its utility to the state, then his wartime drawings rehearse in advance the strategies of the cultural Cold War, in which the politics of US universalism are built into the very structure of culture as such, present everywhere and thus visible nowhere. If, however, we view Steinberg's cosmopolitanism from the perspective of his allegiance to a transnational Levantine diaspora, then the politics of his work take on a different, if no less covert, charge.

To reduce the achievements of Steinberg's wartime *New Yorker* drawings to a corrupt cosmopolitanism is to underestimate their complexity. Their function as propaganda allowed the artist a degree of covert autonomy within which to experiment with new drawing techniques and even to criticize the US state itself from a position of relative security. The letters he

wrote back to his wife in New York show that he considered these "very special" drawings an exciting new departure from his conventional style, "different from my usual." In March and April of 1944, he repeated to her his desire to publish an entire book dedicated solely to war drawings. (They filled approximately half of *All in Line*, his first compilation of drawings, published in 1945.)[82] He was also acutely aware of his own newly assumed position of national superiority, as a former resident of Italy returning to the country as a US serviceman. "I'm for them just another sucker, another tourist easy to fool and belonging to a strange superior class, the sahib, just as in India, they are just 'natives.' "[83] Steinberg's transnational biography alerted him to the arbitrary construction of such colonial-style relationships, figured here as a version of the master and slave trapped in mutual misrecognition, but he also believed that his cosmopolitanism simultaneously allowed him in dialectical fashion to step outside of the destructive binary and objectivize the relationship itself, from without. Taken as a series, the drawings depict a dense network of gazes by which the US army and the "natives" construct each other as spectacles. The American soldier poses in colonial pith helmet for an official portrait taken by an Indian photographer, and in the next image another soldier crouches to take an intrusive closeup photograph of a lower-caste Indian man (figures 14 and 15). As Steinberg wrote to Hedda Sterne, these drawings took their formal inspiration from photography—"I act like a photographer and sketch what I see."[84] Unlike the dramatic war photography made famous in *Life* and elsewhere, however, Steinberg's reportage took on a self-reflexive aspect that made perception rather than violence its true subject and opened up the possibility of the United States itself and its image-making processes being judged from without.

Far from constituting an anomaly or aberration in the Steinberg oeuvre, these wartime drawings exhibit tendencies and concerns that would remain with him throughout his career. His preoccupation with the social, material processes of moving between abstraction and representation, which we have already explored through his engagement with modernist painting, can be traced here to the difficulties encountered in addressing a particular example of that process, that of the state. Contemporary geographers and political theorists remain preoccupied with the fundamental question of what the relation might be between the abstract notion of the state and its concrete effects. Timothy Mitchell, for example, writes, "a construct such as the state occurs not merely as a subjective belief, but as a representation reproduced in visible everyday forms, such as the language of legal practice,

Figure 14. Saul Steinberg, *Calcutta 1943*, 1943. Ink on paper, 14 1/2 × 11 1/2 in. Saul Steinberg Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, inv. 5273. Published in the *New Yorker*, April 28, 1945. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

the architecture of public buildings, the wearing of military uniforms, or the marking and policing of frontiers. The ideological forms of the state are an empirical phenomenon, as solid and discernible as a legal structure or a party system."[85] Arguments such as this, advanced by Mitchell as well as by figures like David Harvey, emphasize the need to conceive of the state as an abstract entity that nevertheless takes concrete forms and has material effects.[86] From this perspective, the uniformed soldiers who fill Steinberg's wartime drawings are to be understood as one visible form among many taken by the US state in its attempts to materialize itself in the world and thereby to extend its power and influence in tangible ways. Likewise, the

Figure 15. Saul Steinberg, Untitled, 1943. Ink on paper, 11 1/2 × 14 1/2 in. Saul Steinberg Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, inv. 526. Published in the *New Yorker*, April 28, 1945. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

improvised cinema Steinberg depicts in figure 16, in which "natives" and soldiers are preparing to watch a Hollywood movie, serves in this context as a visible, miraculous materialization both of light on the screen and of the state itself abroad. (Many of the Chinese, he noted, "were more or less afraid of that kind of magic.")[87] The public buildings and intersections that fill his work from the 1950s onward, his *New Yorker* covers depicting Uncle Sam or the Statue of Liberty, and indeed the satirical maps of the 1980s and 1990s continue in this vein, offering second-order representations of state image formation that to varying degrees make room for satire and critique.[88]

As Akhil Gupta has argued, when creating a cultural representation of a state, one is not strictly able to take a position either outside or inside it. In his formulation, the process of state representation is rather a Gramscian war of position on the terrain of the ideological field, and "what is at stake is a transformation in the manner in which the state comes to be constructed. This is a struggle that problematizes the historical divide between those who choose to do political work 'within' the state and those who work 'outside' it, because the cultural construction of the state in public culture can result from, and affect, both in equal measure."[89] Such reflections are apposite in the sense that Steinberg's biography and skills led him

Figure 16. Saul Steinberg, *Chabua India-Burma, 1943*, 1943. Ink on paper, 10 1/4 × 14 1/2 in. Saul Steinberg Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, inv. 5262. Published in the *New Yorker*, April 28, 1945, 20. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

at different moments in his life to work both "within" and "outside" the state. My arguments here are intended to show how this special ability to shift between the two positions not only came to determine his artistic practices and preoccupations but also provided him with a selection of overlapping roles—European intellectual, US serviceman, modernist highbrow, middlebrow cartoonist—among which he could maneuver as the situation required and several of which he could use as camouflage for the buried politics performed by his art.

Complicity, Espionage, and the Brussels World's Fair

"My constant saying is that what I am doing is political par excellence, and that anybody who wants me to be didactic and explicit would like me to lose my time," Steinberg explained in a 1965 interview.[90] The notion of politics inhering in the very act of representation, while at the same time being disavowed in content as didactic, is a defining move both of modernism after Joyce and of the cultural Cold War undertaken by a coalition of

intellectuals and the CIA in the 1940s and 1950s. Joyce's famous remark, "Don't talk to me about politics, I'm only interested in style," finds an oblique correspondence in the words of Nicolas Nabokov, cousin of Vladimir and chair of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, a CIA-funded organization founded in 1950 to promote anticommunism in the cultural sphere through the sponsorship of international festivals and events. "In order to achieve our aims, we shall build our publicity campaign progressively, emphasizing chiefly the cultural impact of the exposition. Only gradually shall we begin to stress the political meaning of the exposition, the political side being inherent in the program itself."[91] Rather than claim an equivalence between the two statements, I want to suggest rather that the architects of the cultural Cold War, from Nicolas Nabokov and George Kennan through to Clement Greenberg and Dwight Macdonald, benefited from the way in which the politics of modernist form could be universalized in the act of its appropriation by postwar institutions of culture, whether MoMA, the CCF, or *Encounter* magazine. Joyce was one of those figures, alongside Kafka and Proust in literature and Picasso and Mondrian in painting, who lent themselves to being reframed in this way during the canonization of high modernism in the US during the 1940s and 1950s. He was also Steinberg's favorite writer—he called Joyce and Vladimir Nabokov his two "greatest teachers"—and a figure with whom Steinberg explicitly identified himself.[92] It is striking how Steinberg conceives of Joyce's technique as a means by which mimetic content can be used as a diversionary front to conceal more foundational processes at work in the novel. "Joyce, for instance, . . . has these two parts. The social comment is the camouflage for his words, for his game of words, for the construction of phrases and so on."[93] This reading of Joyce, taken alongside Steinberg's work for the OSS during the war, opens up a crucial dimension in our understanding of his negotiation of the cultural field. If institutions can use aesthetics as a means of covertly advancing their political interests, then, in a dialectic reversal, the artist could use institutional protection to advance his own subversive activities. The tactics of covert cultural warfare might function in several directions simultaneously.

On his return to the United States in October 1944, following his overseas assignments, Steinberg gave an internal interview to the OSS in which he claimed that personnel engaged in secret morale operations "should be extremely intelligent and craft minded. They should be recruited long before any war and should be infiltrated in the countries where they should work . . . there is no need to communicate with them or for them to com-

municate with [their home agency]. They know . . . better than the people outside do . . . in what ways they can best poison the minds of the population."[94] Though these words have been cited several times in Steinberg criticism, scholars have been reluctant to take them seriously as a way of understanding how he envisaged his position as an artist in relation to the state. They invite us to frame Steinberg's postwar work in terms that he himself repeatedly used—those of modern espionage, infiltration, and duplicity. That he performed a secret propaganda role in World War II for the US government has been documented and necessarily accepted, but the possibility that he continued to consider himself as a cultural spy, a double agent without a handler, working against those same interests from within the heart of the nation's cultural establishment has not. And yet the evidence suggests that he imagined this quite precisely to be his role, by virtue of his affiliation with the Jewish diaspora and the European modernist tradition in literature.

The most important source for our understanding of the relationship between Steinberg's artistic practice and his interest in espionage is the long interview recorded on tape in 1960 by the American Jewish Committee as part of their oral history collection.[95] In the course of this interview, in which the conversation orbits continuously around the question of Jewish identity in the modern world, Steinberg offers the opinion that the notion of a spy's invisibility has always held a seduction for him.

> This . . . this attracts me, the . . . the invisibility, the intimate knowledge that one has when he knows that he is invisible. I think of spies, for instance, spying. The main thing about the spy is that he knows that he is a spy and the other people don't. That's the great . . . the most significant thing about the spy, and just because he has a secret that he keeps for himself, by definition, makes him very alive, very alert, he has to see, he is a spy.
>
> That's the thing about the invisibility, having a secret. I thought of Proust in these terms. At the time when he was a real snob, he knew that he was a Jew and he knew that the other people knew he was a Jew and so on, but he was pretending that he wasn't a Jew. He was going among the aristocracy and so on, but he knew he had this secret, he knew he was a Jew. So that gave him the extraordinary privacy and acuteness. He could really see because he was invisible, that part of him, one part of him was invisible.[96]

These remarks offer us a way of embedding Steinberg's vanishing trick in the traumatic history of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, as well as that of

international espionage in World War II and the Cold War. It provides an antidote to the thin, historyless account of Steinberg's aesthetics that we received from Danto, Rosenberg, and others, returning the vexed question of race and power to our reading of his work. The foundation for artistic insight, as Steinberg learns from Proust, is to become invisible to authority by assimilating oneself into it, to court power only the better to understand it. The idea of racial passing, which for Steinberg had taken on a new significance when evading Italian Fascists in Milan in the early 1940s, is transformed into cultural espionage, from an act of survival into one of artistic strategy; the artist needs to "to disappear and still be there," as he said of Proust.[97]

It should be noted that Steinberg also read Joyce as "a Jewish influence" in similar terms, as another modernist spy observing the world from under cover: "The hero was always for me a guy dressed up on a horse fighting the dragon and so on. Now, I see Joyce and I see myself and the Jew in general as living inside the dragon and being literally inside. If necessary, you eat his liver and kill him, but that's the last resort because you have to live in the dragon, that's your house. It's warm inside, it's comfortable and you're transported, and there's a peephole you look out, you see marvelous things, the marvelous outdoors, but you stay there."[98] The symbol of the dragon, which was sometimes transmuted into a crocodile or even an automobile in various interviews and drawings, was Steinberg's shorthand way of articulating his own imagined location in relative space vis-à-vis institutional power, whether at the level of the US government for whom he sometimes worked or of the postwar cultural elite.[99] It is the spatial representation of his vanishing trick. The historical period we are currently addressing was characterized by the convergence of these two forms of institutional power in the cultural Cold War, crystallized in organizations such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom and its US affiliate the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, among whose members Steinberg counted several close friends.[100] Before we examine one of the explicit moments at which Steinberg operated at the convergence of cultural and state institutions, at the Brussels World's Fair in 1958, I simply want to draw attention to how he used the spatial metaphor of infiltration and covert surveillance as a way of bringing the question of form and content to bear upon his aesthetic practice and his negotiation of the cultural field. He identified with Joyce's ability to camouflage experimental form as social comment, as well as Proust's practice of ethnic and sexual passing, as methods by which the artist can preserve

some degree of autonomy when under threat. In the 1940s and 1950s, as intellectuals and artists all over the United States made their compromises with institutional power in order to survive the transition into a Cold War capitalist hegemony, these were valuable lessons to learn.[101] In this process, the notion of intellectual autonomy in the United States was redefined from ideal critical disinterestedness to a function of broader institutional frameworks that might offer financial protection and a public voice in return for ideological loyalty and the bestowing of cultural prestige. It can be traced through a series of critiques offered throughout the period by C. Wright Mills, Irving Howe, Christopher Lasch, and others.[102] Steinberg's vanishing trick is to be understood as an alternative to the narrative of heroic resistance that he evokes in the imagery of the knight and the dragon, and that Greenberg conjured in his mythologizing of the New York avant-garde, asking, "What can fifty do against a hundred and forty million?"[103] It was, rather, a way for a Jewish émigré artist to cope with a cultural field convulsed by shifts in global power and competing aesthetic regimes.

Steinberg's gigantic mural for the American pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair represents an illuminating case study in the accommodations, negotiations, and limits entailed by Steinberg's chosen strategy. His subject, "the American people," was given to him in advance, and even the method of collage was suggested by the organizers.[104] Entitled *The Americans*, the mural's explicit objective was to answer the question which, as we have noted, he had faced early in his career, during World War II: How to represent a state? There was much at stake. Expo '58, as it was informally known, came at a time of great tension in the Cold War, in the wake of the violent suppression of the Hungarian uprising of autumn 1956 and the launch of Sputnik-1 in October 1957. As Robert W. Rydell's account of the US exhibit confirms, the American team understood the fair as an unprecedented opportunity to gain advantage in the cultural Cold War. In his appeal to President Eisenhower for funding, the commissioner general for the US pavilion wrote, "With appropriate funds, we can do a Sputnik culturally, intellectually, and spiritually for the nation I have the honor of representing. We have a great chance to tell the American story with the complete truth, modesty, and conviction because we have nothing to hide. Properly handled, this could be a strong public relations weapon in combating Communist propaganda. With bungling, we could have a bombshell that could score a resounding victory for the other side. It seems to me it is vitally important to our whole foreign policy."[105] This appeal, which successfully

attracted substantial state funding, exemplifies the Cold War rhetorical trope we have already noted, whereby the propaganda function of culture conceals itself through transparency, having "nothing to hide." The very gesture of representation is presented as simultaneously neutral and yet persuasive in itself, allowing the real work of manipulation to be undertaken covertly at the level of the management and curation that frames it. The committee tasked with this organization consulted with a number of prominent American intellectuals, including David Riesman and Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., before proposing three guiding principles for the pavilion: first, it "should convey the feeling that in the USA there is a more equitable distribution of *all* the good things of life than anywhere else in the world"; second, it should present itself as a nation undergoing continuous evolution, with "unfinished business" to attend to, particularly with regard to race relations; and finally, these messages "should be put across by indirection," thus avoiding "heavy, belabored and fatiguing attempts at 'propaganda.' "[106] The strategy was honesty by indirection, hiding in plain sight.

Steinberg, recruited by his friend Bernard Rudofsky to provide the mural that would greet entrants to the pavilion, was an inspired choice to represent the nation, by virtue of his almost unique standing in the US cultural field. Steinberg offered an apparent resolution to the contradiction at the heart of the idea of the World's Fair, which as Monica Sassatelli notes, represented "one of the main forms of institutionalization of the nation-state, whilst at the same time laying claim to a universalistic culture for the purposes of foreign relations and cultural diplomacy."[107] Steinberg, as we have seen, had a range of roles at his disposal that meant he could be American and cosmopolitan at the same time, clearing space for a representation of the nation that could be seen as at once celebratory and ironically self-critical, capable of imagining itself from within and without simultaneously—precisely the value that Danto found in his work—and therefore immune to the kind of jingoism exemplified by the Soviet pavilion next door. Furthermore, and just as importantly, Steinberg brought with him the prestige of high art, being fluent in the European languages of cubism, Dada, and surrealism, while at the same time retaining elements of realist representation. While CIA-sponsored organizations such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom had been set up with the intention of countering the United States' international reputation as a country dominated by an unsophisticated mass culture, there remained a residual suspicion of abstract art among many in the political establishment. Indeed, Eisenhower was persuaded to send George

Allen, US Information Agency director, to investigate complaints that the art selection was "un-American." Allen returned with the opinion that there was too much abstraction.[108] "The width of your appeal," Harold Ross had written to Steinberg in 1951, "makes me rather proud of the country."[109] His apparent ability to transcend the stratification of high and low cultures in the United States was not only an artistic but also a national achievement, demonstrating an instinctively democratic, cosmopolitan good taste on the part of its citizens.

As T. J. Clark has argued, accounts of the interrelation of the visual arts and the cultural Cold War have tended to tell us much about how artists such as Jackson Pollock could be appropriated by cold warriors but little about what the Cold War meant to Pollock. Such scholarship, Clark notes, has never been able to provide an account of interpretation.[110] What makes the case of Steinberg's work for Expo '58 so interesting is that the work was specifically commissioned for display in the US pavilion as a representation of the American people, and therefore it tells us quite precisely about the interpretation of his work and his response to the Cold War. Not only was he an inspired choice for the reasons I have suggested, but he conceived, executed, and displayed *The Americans* under conditions of institutional propaganda that he later admitted having resented, even as they offered him a cover, a secure position within the crocodile.[111]

Steinberg's response to his commission was to present a series of scenes from American life divided into distinct locations, from the baseball stadium to the downtown district of a big city (see figure 17 and plate 7). Melissa Renn's essay on *The Americans* notes some of the work's satirical elements, such as the "mass of businessmen's heads," which serve "as a synecdoche for the culture of corporate conformity that pervaded America in the 1950s."[112] These gently critical features of the work, however, resemble something like the social comment that Steinberg understood as "camouflage" in Joyce's fiction. The organization of the mural was inspired by the dioramas Steinberg had seen in museums of natural history.[113] The United States was to be objectified as a tribal territory and its people displayed in their natural habitats. Approached with this in mind, *The Americans* becomes a vision of US Cold War social anthropology turned upon itself, its figures rendered grotesque by cubist-inspired collage. Steinberg took the two dominant museum cultures that underpinned the project of the US pavilion—art and natural history—and established their interdependence. The objective pretensions of postwar social sciences are contaminated by modernist aes-

Figure 17. Saul Steinberg, *The Americans*, 1958. Detail from *Baseball.* Collage on photographic background, 118 × 35 in. Musée royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

thetic forms, while modernism is contaminated by the representation of concrete social content. *The Americans* is in this sense a portrait not of the country's people but of its cultural establishment, a satire of its rigid habits of seeing rather than of its way of life. The mural has much in common, then, with Steinberg's famous *View of the World from 9th Avenue*, intended as a parody of New York's provincialism but received as a celebration of its *chutzpah.*[114] A similar structure can be observed in Steinberg's favorite novel *Ulysses*, in which, as Andrew Gibson has shown, Joyce's formal experimentation performs a concealed function of revenge upon the language of the colonizer when turned reflexively upon itself.[115]

The tactics of the US organizers in endorsing propaganda by indirection

cleared a space for irony and ambiguity, which Steinberg exploited only at the risk of remaining unnoticed. The cloak of invisibility that he knowingly took on imposed its own limits on his public exposure, and *The Americans* did its job only too well, being barely remarked on despite, or even because of, its great size and prominence. Nowhere was it mentioned in the US exhibition catalogue, and although it received some favorable notes in the international press, no one engaged substantively with its complexity, least of all the Russian visitors interviewed by the *New York Times Magazine*, who pronounced themselves "baffled."[116] The organizers approached various museums, including MoMA, to find a home for it but were unsuccessful. Steinberg's largest work was packed up and left to obscurity. The question of invisibility, then, is posed at every level of *The Americans*' composition and reception history, creating a challenge for the contemporary art historian, who is left with a constant suspicion of having missed something, of being asked to see what is not there. Steinberg himself told one interviewer that "the essence of art is to see the invisible through its absence," and my argument in this chapter has been that Steinberg's vanishing tricks can be rendered visible by returning him to the thick spatial and historical contexts of exile, geopolitics, and the shifting grounds of the cultural field.[117] With that argument in mind, I want to consider one particular case of disappearance and invisibility at Expo '58, that of African Americans.

Soon after receiving his commission, Steinberg wrote to Aldo Buzzi, "I'm in trouble, I have to do a one-hundred-meter mural for the show in Brussels, I must use my *cabeza*, think (the subject is *people* in US. How do you draw the blacks?)"[118] Steinberg's dilemma takes us straight to the contradictory heart of the cultural Cold War. Abstract expressionism provided one answer to the need for a unified state image to project across the Atlantic as a set of universal values. In painting of this sort, the color line that disfigured pre-Civil Rights America could more easily be disguised or evaded, and the New York School's embedded subjectivity—white, male, heterosexual—could be projected as powerfully representative of the state as a whole.[119] Steinberg's artistic practice, even if it retained the representational function that was taboo in the New York school, also made a universalist gesture. "Well, it's difficult to draw a Negro," he said in 1965, "because the way I draw people is by trying to make a certain standard profile: a nose or the face; it doesn't indicate the certain person, but just a man or a woman, let's say. This, when I am concerned not with people but with an idea, a symbolic idea. In that case, I don't need whites or Negroes; it doesn't matter what

they are."[120] What is interesting about his remark to Buzzi, then, is that Steinberg considered that race *did* matter at Brussels. The voicing of the dilemma itself tells us that for him racial difference was integral to a representation of the American people. We should not be surprised at this, since in his memoirs he wrote that, as a youth in Romania, "I had no rights, and went to high school wearing a name plate with a number, like an automobile . . . My childhood, my adolescence in Romania were a little like being a black in the state of Mississippi."[121] Like many other Jewish intellectuals of this period, Steinberg took seriously the shared experience of prejudice that united African Americans and Jewish émigrés, acknowledging migration and exile to be conditions internal to the state, as well as transnational. What his aesthetic problem forced him to confront, however, was that it was much more difficult for African Americans to pass than for Jews, as in his readings of Proust and Joyce.

Steinberg's dilemma over representing African Americans among the people of the United States was echoed in the racial discipline imposed on the US pavilion. In a dramatic U-turn, after the opening of the exhibition, the United States Information Agency overrode the organizers' commitment to addressing the question of race relations and secretly removed the "Unfinished Business" exhibit containing photographs of mixed-race groups.[122] Such internal disputes about the representation of the state by the state reveal the foundational impulses behind the cultural Cold War themselves to be contradictory from the very beginning. As Michael Rogin has claimed, "Countersubversives desire the submergence of separate identities within an ideal America, but they also enforce divisions because they are threatened by boundary collapse. That oscillation between a fear of the breakdown of all difference and a desire for merger is at the core of American political demonology."[123] Following Rogin, we can see how Steinberg was faced with a set of demands that could be reconciled only through resorting to the same strategies employed by the state itself: modes of secrecy and duplicity, strictly enforced boundaries between essence and appearance, thought and action. His response to his representational dilemma was to render all the figures in his collage using varying shades of light-brown wrapping paper. Race was nowhere to be seen in the US pavilion, and we are left with the necessity of "seeing the invisible through its absence."

My purpose in reminding us of this historical tale is not to make a judgment on Steinberg's failure to answer adequately his own question of how to "represent the blacks" but to indicate the kind of space that he created

for himself in negotiating the cultural field the way he did. His mode of operation, which conflated the artist and the secret agent in the Cold War, provided him with a secure location in which to preserve the threatened remnants of his artistic identity, but it also imposed limitations on his expression of dissent. Reading *The Americans* in its context, it is difficult to distinguish between racial invisibility as guerrilla tactic and racial erasure as coping strategy. In this sense, Steinberg's work finds a closer parallel in the fiction of his contemporary Ralph Ellison than it does in the work of his heroes Joyce and Proust. The narrator of *Invisible Man*, published six years earlier in 1952, is another man who seeks positivity in invisibility, claiming on the first page that "it is sometimes advantageous to be unseen."[124] Ellison's novel explicitly thematizes that which remains secret in Steinberg's work and life, how the condition of invisibility in American society might yield up the latent potential for subversion, which nonetheless remains tantalizingly out of reach. *Invisible Man*'s protagonist, like Steinberg, retreats to a warm shelter within a white building, feeding secretly off its power source. From there he constructs an alternative form of dissent in the form of the artwork itself, speaking "on the lower frequencies" of mass culture, inflecting his language with the rhythms of jazz, just as Steinberg drew on the vernacular visual language of cartoons and comics. The novel concludes with doubts raised over the value of the narrator's hibernation, "since there's a possibility that even an invisible man has a social role to play."[125]

We are faced, then, with the question of what social role Steinberg had left to play, though without the expectation of a clear answer. The closest he came to offering one came in a late interview from 1992. "I kidnapped some of the old words from that world we are watching disappear, the twentieth-century horror world, to describe myself in the past; the inspector, the spy. A better new word to describe me, from this new world we see rising before us: the programmer. I am the programmer, and, a little bit, the hacker, the virus playing with these things."[126] These words demonstrate for us how consistently Steinberg cultivated an awareness of historical shifts in the cultural field. If during the mid-twentieth-century "horror world" he laid claim to the popular metaphors available to him in using transnational espionage as a framework for conceiving his social function, then late in the century he found other ones more recognizable to our own contemporary digital moment. Thinking of Steinberg as a hacker or, even more potently, as a virus helps us to understand more clearly the stakes of his earlier practice, when the discourse of Cold War spy games offered the best, if still

unsatisfactory, way of articulating his relationship to the broader cultural and social system in which he existed. The virus covertly insinuates itself into a system and disguises itself as one of the functioning elements in order to disrupt the flow of information, jamming the circuit from within. Significantly for our purposes, moreover, the virus performs this role simply in order to survive and reproduce itself, rather than to pursue an end. The institutions of culture and state are necessary hosts.

This is not to suggest that Steinberg purged himself entirely of more old-fashioned impulses toward autonomy and purity. His letters to Hedda Sterne indicate a nagging anxiety about having organized his work around institutional demands: "I feel that I lost my time for years. That I did nothing —of all the drawings I can't think of any with pleasure. My preoccupation has been success probably. I need it but it's very much the way I need whisky."[127] The coexistence in Steinberg of such commercial motives alongside the disinterested work of aesthetics has made some scholars uncomfortable, too. Iain Topliss, for example, writes with concern about the relationship between advertisements for luxury goods (some of them by Steinberg himself) and intelligent cartoons among the pages of the *New Yorker*, ultimately arguing that the cartoons redeem themselves by offering a moment "free from the enslaving desire for the commodity," as if the cartoons were not themselves commodities.[128] We are now in a position, I hope, to be more clear-eyed about the mutual identity of art and commerce in the American postwar and to recognize Steinberg's achievement as a process of continual adaptation and negotiation, rather than another example of the uncompromising drive toward freedom and self-creation more familiar in accounts of American art in the period. As he readily conceded, his relationship to the United States was one of complicity with its institutions, and as Irving Howe wrote in 1954, "what matters is the terms upon which the writer enters into such relationships, his willingness to understand with whom he is dealing, his readiness not to deceive himself that an unpleasant necessity is a desirable virtue."[129] In Adorno's contemporary view, examined at the beginning of this book, such complicity may appear reprehensible. Steinberg's decision to live inside the dragon stands in stark contrast to his recommendation of "the concept of austerity" as "the most acceptable lifeboat."[130] From the perspective of the present, however, Steinberg's complicity appears as the only grounds from which postwar art becomes possible at all, pointing the way to pop art in one direction and to the metafictional tendencies of literary postmodernism in another.

Conclusion

Not to Grin Is a Sin

Raymond Williams may appear a less cosmopolitan figure in the history of cultural criticism than the great Marxist thinkers of the previous generation, such as C. L. R. James, with whom he shared an antipathy to the perceived elitism of high modernism. But Williams's best-known work, *Culture and Society* (1958), traced the idea of culture through British intellectual history, from the Industrial Revolution to the twentieth century, in a way that might be compared to James's *American Civilization* in its historical sweep focused on a single nation. *Culture and Society* has often been contextualized alongside the open hostility to Americanization espoused by British Communists in the 1950s, and understood as an attempt to establish a national left tradition for the postwar United Kingdom.[1] Correspondingly, Williams's most influential concept, the "structure of feeling" he defined and refined throughout his later career, has been taken, following his own cues, to be a property of time rather than of space, "a particular quality of social experience and relationship, historically distinct from other particular qualities, which gives the sense of a generation or of a period."[2] Nevertheless, there seems room for a transnationalizing of Williams's structure of feeling, an enterprise that might take into account movement across space as well as historical time. The transatlantic aliens I have discussed in this book, despite their ideological and aesthetic particularities, shared more than the generational experience of witnessing the fracture and demise of European modernist culture during the social, economic, and political crises of the 1930s and 1940s. They also held in common a certain spatial trajectory, which necessitated that they grasp this process from a point of view that was itself mobile and unstable, leading to double vision, interference, and feedback, the experience of the transatlantic uncanny. Reading the great émigré texts of the 1940s, such as Nabokov's *Bend Sinister* or Adorno and Horkheimer's

Dialectic of Enlightenment, one cannot be sure if the overwhelming barbarism that threatens the viability of literature, art, and thought is to be located far on the transatlantic horizon, in Nazism and Stalinism, or looms instead indecipherably close in the US mass cultural environment. Such problems of focus brought about by the confusion of distance and proximity have been ubiquitous in the case studies that make up this book, and part of my objective has been to recuperate their critical value. There is truth in Adorno's aphorism in *Minima Moralia* that "the splinter in your eye is the best magnifying glass."[3] But the combination of temporal and geographical coordinates also created a distinctive structure of feeling that correlates with the perspectival effects we have been discussing. This structure is characterized above all by a contestation over the experience, performance, and signs of happiness. Its chief motif is that of the unreadable smile, the leer or grin that slips into grimace.

The particular applicability that Williams's structure of feeling holds for our purposes lies in the way he conceived it explicitly in response to challenges raised by reification theory, as elucidated in the work of Georg Lukács and Lucien Goldmann.[4] Structure of feeling denotes that mode of social experience which remains "in solution" or "in process."[5] Its qualities are "emergent or pre-emergent" (132). In this sense, structure of feeling represents the possibility of grasping social experience before its conversion into fully formed and recognizable monads.

> In most descriptions and analysis, culture and society are expressed in an habitual past tense. The strongest barrier to the recognition of human cultural activity is this immediate and regular conversion of experience into finished products. What is defensible as a procedure in conscious history, where on certain assumptions many actions can be definitively taken as having ended, is habitually projected, not only into the always moving substance of the past, but into contemporary life, in which relationships, institutions and formations in which we are still actively involved are converted, by this procedural mode, into formed wholes rather than forming and formative processes. Analysis is then centred on relations between these produced institutions, formations and experiences, so that now, as in that produced past, only the fixed explicit forms exist, and living presence is always, by definition, receding. (128)

This process of reification, by which relationships, institutions, and formations are belatedly misrecognized as historically complete and conceptually coherent, describes what happened to European modernism in the United

States at midcentury. Although the term *cultural Cold War*, which we used in discussing Saul Steinberg and Simone de Beauvoir, is one of the names given to this process, this book has made a case for recognizing its broader historical development from an earlier moment in the mid-1930s, when MoMA began to institutionalize modernism in exhibitions like *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*. The discipline of American Studies, like the early academic examples of what we now recognize as a tradition of modernist criticism, was born in this period of the same impulse to harness, codify, and monumentalize cultural practices as autonomous and self-evident, at a time when they were anything but. Scholars still contend with these disciplinary legacies in the form of training, habits, and assumptions, even (perhaps most) when they are in the process of being challenged under the guise of a revolutionary turn. It is not the least achievement of the "New Modernist Studies" that we now have a better sense of what the old one might still look like. In this book, however, I have also sought to recover, where possible, the "living presence" that Williams finds receding from view, provisional and conflicted responses to a fluid cultural field that appear to us now as idiosyncratic and strange: Chandler's Flaubertian perspective on the pulps, Grosz's appropriation of Norman Rockwell for Dada, James's Hegelian reading of Jennifer Jones in the tradition of Wordsworth, Steinberg's commitment to cartooning as the continuation of Mondrian's abstract aesthetics by other means. These instances belong to a tumultuous historical moment at which the relationship between transatlantic individuals and American institutions like Hollywood, MoMA, and Alfred Knopf's publishing house existed in a state of play, open to shifts in position, alliances, and reconfigurations that later assume the character of bold, hubristic, or even hopelessly utopian gestures. They represent brief snatches of harmonies and syncopations across cultural strata and national boundaries that became increasingly difficult to maintain as the room for maneuver in the cultural field gradually diminished and protocols for policing taste were reestablished. The crucial years of transition here are 1947–50. These saw on the political front the effective defeat of the unions by Taft-Hartley, the initiation of the Marshall Plan and the Cold War, and the establishment of paranoid anticommunism as orthodoxy. In the cultural sphere they included, to mention three indicative events, the acceptance of abstract expressionism as modern art's house style, William Faulkner's establishment as the American modernist par excellence after his Nobel Prize for Literature in 1949, and the founding of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in 1950.

Important though those institutional histories have been for us, Williams's structure of feeling invites us to consider those more fleeting experiences and feelings that mediated *between* the individual and the social, prompting an effort to comprehend how the personal negotiation of transatlantic cultural and intellectual alienation comes to be articulated. He regarded imaginative literature as a privileged medium for such expression, "a simultaneous realization of and response to" the underlying and formative structures of social relationships, constituting the "dramatization of a process" rather than its reification.[6] Although the literary has indeed played an important role in this book, it has often been in even more quotidian forms than Williams has in mind—private correspondence in particular, along with occasional essays, reviews, and interviews, have supplemented the analyses of more conventional and public forms of what he calls "imaginative literature." For example, James's *American Civilization* and Adorno's *Minima Moralia* are aporetic works addressed primarily to personal friends and colleagues, and their critical contents remain to some extent "in solution," as Williams would have it, as oblique and inward affective qualities that require particular forms of attention to discern them—hence, my reading of the latter as a type of modernist autobiography, and the former as demanding vivification by the critic's passionate letters to Constance Webb about his evolving thoughts on movies and soap operas. Correspondingly, if the visual arts seem to offer a less propitious medium in which to observe the dramatization of a process, then in light of Grosz's anxious letters to slick magazine editors or Steinberg's unguarded responses to a recorded interview, we are able to loosen individual works from their institutional frames and to recognize them as improvised and provisional responses in an ongoing process of negotiation and dialogue. In this way, the techniques and formal qualities visible in the work can be understood as strategies for coping and surviving in a new cultural economy.

If there is a structure of feeling held in common among the transatlantic aliens, discoverable on the terrain of affect in "thought as felt and feelings as thought," then it comes in response to the reifying discourse that emerged at midcentury around the notion of happiness.[7] In Mary Esteve's words, happiness became "a kind of affective correlative of the nation-state" in the years after World War II, though arguably this development may be traced to an earlier moment when positive affect began to be marshaled as a weapon in the battle for public confidence in economic recovery during the Great Depression.[8] The version of happiness that was effectively insti-

tutionalized at midcentury in the United States was modeled after the creation and satisfaction of individual wants, leading in Esteve's account to a crisis in which American consumer culture became a victim of its own success, satisfying wants faster than it could create them.[9] In Vivasvan Soni's longer view, this understanding of happiness is also tied to the national tradition of American liberal thought, but it dates from the revolutionary era's "privatization of happiness," which made it "a thing [that] can be given, acquired, exchanged," emptied of the earlier political valence it had wielded as a social judgment made by others.[10] Following this view, in the midcentury United States that inherited that liberal legacy, happiness was to be vigorously pursued and annexed to the individual as an inalienable right, but without any real sense of its contents beyond the abstract flourishing of personhood. In 1948, when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drawn up alongside plans for the new United Nations headquarters in Manhattan, it explicitly included "the full development of the human personality." However, by 1957, when Howard Mumford Jones wrote his polemical attack on the culture of conformity entitled *The Pursuit of Happiness*, the very ubiquity of happiness in mass cultural discourse had become stigmatized by left intellectuals as an indication of deep national complacency and delusion, "a symptom of false consciousness."[11]

The question of happiness and how to achieve it was foregrounded in C. L. R. James's American culture critique. Indeed, the working title of his *American Civilization* was "the struggle for happiness," a phrase that survived as the title for one of the chapters, in which he surveys the shifting contours of contemporary industrial labor relations. It is puzzling, however, that we find little analysis there of happiness itself, leaving us to wonder if the meanings attached to it were too obvious to mention or else too subtle to be approached head on. The chapter is organized around the thesis that American industrial workers held an insuppressible desire for autonomy over their own labor, "to manage and arrange the work they are doing without any interference or supervision by anybody."[12] Implicitly, James assumes a humanist Marxist viewpoint from which happiness is to be understood as unalienated labor. The task he sets for the intellectual is to help industrial workers realize the radical implications of their desire for labor autonomy by making the conceptual link between "an instinctive conception of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," on the one hand, and concrete changes in labor relations, on the other.[13] Years later, in a 1961 letter to Maxwell Geismar concerning William Styron's novel *Lie Down in Darkness*, James

made his thesis on American happiness more explicit, in a way that shows how the reified discourse of the "right to happiness" might be harnessed for revolutionary purposes rather than condescendingly discouraged as delusional. "I have to put it crudely—Americans expect to be happy; they want to be happy; they see no reason why they should not be happy. When it turns out that, despite material promises which they know are for many of them reasonably satisfactory, happiness continues to elude them, then their fury and frustration is the fury and frustration that permeates Styron's book."[14] For James, then, American happiness is the name given to the always-promised, which inversely precipitates in the present negative states of affect, anger, and frustration. The struggle for happiness, in this sense, is less a struggle to attain it than to harness the affects it elicits in desiring subjects for a revolutionary future.

The moment at which to grasp James's subjective orientation toward the struggle for happiness is in his love letters to Constance Webb, in particular one he wrote in September 1943, as he lived "in daily expectation of the beginning of an upheaval in Europe, marking the beginning of the socialist revolution."[15] James's sense of place in this letter is important: he writes from Long Island, where he exists alone with "this house, the platform, wind, air, sun and the sea, and the sound in front and to left and right. My table is filled with a mass of papers and cuttings about the war. The surroundings are commonplace—not even a radio or a phonograph, and yet I sit here and you are 3000 miles away and it is a beautiful day" (130). In a way that we do not find in his analytical prose, James articulates with astonishing directness how affect mediates the interrelation of personal erotics and global politics, quotidian states of loneliness and deep social belonging.

> And yet if someone were to say wish two wishes I would say, 1. the socialist revolution and, 2. to sit on the platform with Constance and watch the evening sun go down. The connection may seem to some monstrous. It isn't. Somehow the intensity of a personal experience, even at this distance, the sense of beauty and companionship, which are so very rare, such things when exercised only in the imagination and over a continent's distance, seem to give a personal meaning and significance to the great struggles opening up in Europe. If you don't understand me, I'll try again another time. (130)

This passage gives us structure of feeling *avant le lettre* as both theory and practice, showing us that which is concealed in James's other works from this period, the way in which the perverse optimism of his writings about

American culture was born out of the dialectical interplay of experienced loneliness and isolation in the present and the promise of future happiness in sociality. This is the time to remember the function of the movies in James's everyday rhythms, the way they provided him with an excuse to leave the house and, like the protagonist of "The Star That Would Not Shine," to share a public space with others, even if only in the anonymous dark. In the same letter, he writes, "I work at home. At times I must stop. The only thing that keeps me quiet is the movies. So at all hours of the day or night I go where there is a picture" (128). When he tells Constance that movies like *Now Voyager* "express what the people need—that is, what people miss in their own lives," he writes out of alien experience, "thought as felt, feelings as thought."[16]

While James's response to the pervasive discourse of happiness in midcentury America was cryptic to the extent that it requires some excavation, Theodor Adorno and Simone de Beauvoir were far more direct. The starting point for both lay in their confrontation with advertisements representing bodies consumed with positive affect, and it is striking how similar are their descriptions of the experience as oppressively authoritarian. The tendency for which Adorno is so often derided, his relentless pessimism in the face of the most innocuous cultural phenomena, is observable too in Beauvoir's evident irritation at the images of happiness surrounding her on the streets of Manhattan in January 1947.

> What makes daily life so agreeable in America is the good humor and friendliness of Americans. Of course, this quality has its reverse side. I'm irritated by those imperious invitations to "take life easy," repeated in words and images throughout the day. On advertisements for Quaker Oats, Coca-Cola, and Lucky Strike, what displays of white teeth—the smile seems like lockjaw. The constipated girl smiles a loving smile at the lemon juice that relieves her intestines. In the subway, in the streets, on magazine pages, these smiles pursue me like obsessions. I read on a sign in a drugstore, "Not to grin is a sin." Everyone obeys the order, the system. "Cheer up! Take it easy."[17]

The injunction "not to grin is a sin" can be taken as a shorthand for the émigré critique of the cult of happiness in midcentury America, whereby the display of positive affect as immediacy is instinctively understood to be coercive, fraudulent, and necessitating resistance through inversely negative ones—fury and frustration in the case of James, irritation in the case of Beauvoir, and, for Adorno in 1945, resolute abjection: "just as the reflective

onlooker, meeting the laughing placard of a toothpaste beauty, discerns in her flashlight grin the grimace of torture, so from every joke, even from every pictorial representation, he is assailed by the death sentence on the subject."[18] Whether suggesting lockjaw or the grimace of torture, the ubiquitous image of the smile is uncoupled for the alien from authentic happiness and understood instead as reversible screen, a mask that serves, ineffectively, as an attempt to pass as normal. Adorno's reflections on the toothpaste beauty are illuminated by the chapter on the culture industry that he wrote for *Dialectic of Enlightenment*'s revised edition, published in 1947, in which he makes the distinction between "right" and "wrong" laughter. In the former, laughter comes with relief at the moment when danger or fear is overcome. In the latter, people "cope with fear by defecting to the agencies which inspire it." In this way, he argues, the culture industry "makes laughter the instrument for cheating happiness. To moments of happiness, laughter is foreign."[19]

For a sharper sense of how the smile and laugh are treated in comparable ways across a range of émigré figures, we can turn briefly to Raymond Chandler's fiction. Happiness is perhaps the affect least likely to be represented in hardboiled fiction, dominated as the genre is by cynicism and fear, and smiles are generally absent. The grin, by contrast, is the hardboiled gesture de rigueur and can be traced to Dashiell Hammett's work in the 1920s. In Chandler's fiction it is put into overdrive, appearing on no less than twenty-four occasions in his first novel, *The Big Sleep*, in 1939. The grin is the epitome of hardboiled bodily discipline, an expression that can be consciously willed by individuals and used as a means of coping with a variety of highly pressured social encounters, from violent threats and sexual advances to attempts at deception and duplicity. Its function is that of a protective mask beneath which seething undisciplined affects might be concealed, as signs of vulnerability. Control of the grin is the mark of hardboiled superiority, and it is notable that the criminals' grins tend to slip under pressure, while Marlowe's remains steady. Unlike the stony poker face, which might be said to fulfill the same function, the grin proclaims ironically that there are really no stakes in such encounters: everything is meaningless fun, violence a game, and deceit a question of play.

If this were all Chandler had to say about the grin, then it would remain an essential though opaque motif in this novel. The most interesting moment in *The Big Sleep*, however, is one at which Chandler self-consciously offers us a glimpse of the deep genesis of the hardboiled grin, rooted, as we

have seen Adorno argue, in the death of the subject. This is the episode in which Marlowe overhears the poisoning of Harry Jones and then discovers his body, "his eyes wide open, his face frozen in a tight spasm, the skin bluish."[20] Jones is one of those few male characters in Chandler's fiction who merits Marlowe's respect, in this case because he refuses to give a woman's address to a killer. "You died like a poisoned rat, Harry, but you're no rat to me" (723). The description of Marlowe leaving the building and stepping out into the rain discloses the death mask as the original from which all his hardboiled grins trace their lineage. "It was raining hard again. I walked into it with the heavy drops slapping my face. When one of them touched my tongue I knew that my mouth was open and the ache at the side of my jaws told me it was open wide and strained back, mimicking the rictus of death carved upon the face of Harry Jones" (725). Like Beauvoir's lockjaw and Adorno's grimace of torture, the rictus smile is an involuntary response to suffering and death, fulfilling in ironic mode the right to happiness but also giving the lie to the hardboiled person's willful assumption of the grin. Marlowe becomes here an automated embodiment of death-in-life, his grin the reversed mirror image of agony. The joke, if there is one, is on him.

This quality of affective reversibility is an essential component of the structure of feeling I wish to elucidate here. If we can grasp it, then we are some way toward understanding what I can only describe as the particular *atmosphere* of the midcentury transatlantic imagination, in which objects, environments, and people are persistently dislocated from the affective promises they make. As Sara Ahmed has written, affective response depends upon the angle of arrival into a given environment. "So we may walk into the room and 'feel the atmosphere,' but what we may feel depends on the angle of our arrival. Or we might say that the atmosphere is already angled; it is always felt from a specific point."[21] The most literal crystallization of this structure comes in a quietly brilliant passage toward the end of Nabokov's *Lolita*, with Humbert driving to Pavor Manor to kill Quilty. "While searching for night lodgings, I passed a drive-in. In a selenian glow, truly mystical in its contrast with the moonless and massive night, on a gigantic screen slanting away among dark drowsy fields, a thin phantom raised a gun, both he and his arm reduced to tremulous dishwater by the oblique angle of that receding world,—and the next moment a row of trees shut off the gesticulation."[22] This fleeting vision, which deftly converts the masculine aggression of a Hollywood film into dreamy aestheticism by virtue of its "oblique angle," models the way in which the transatlantic trajec-

tory of certain figures created a tendency to transform the affective expectations of a given community. In Ahmed's account, this makes them "affect aliens."

> I have suggested that happiness is attributed to certain objects that circulate as social goods. When we feel pleasure from such objects, we are aligned; we are facing the right way. We become alienated—out of line with an affective community—when we do not experience pleasure from proximity to objects that are attributed as being good. The gap between the affective value of an object and how we experience an object can involve a range of affects, which are directed by the modes of explanation we offer to fill this gap. If we are disappointed by something that we expected would make us happy, then we generate explanations of why that thing is disappointing. Such explanations can involve an anxious narrative of self-doubt (why am I not made happy by this, what is wrong with me?) or a narrative of rage, where the object that is 'supposed' to make us happy is attributed as the cause of disappointment, which can lead to a rage directed towards those that promised us happiness through the elevation of the object as being good. We become strangers, or affect aliens, in such moments.[23]

Ahmed provides a framework within which to make sense of the perversions and reversals we have been noticing, whereby signs of happiness are so frequently converted into negativity by individuals who are "out of line" with the affective communities they enter.

Lolita provides an illuminating case study of how this process of conversion can function systematically as a critique of happiness as conformism in midcentury America. Nabokov had been interested in how the smile had been appropriated by advertising ever since his arrival in the United States. In the first book he wrote in his new country, *Nikolai Gogol* (1944), he looks to magazine advertisements in search of an example of what he called "poshlust," an ironic travesty of the Russian *poshlost'*, which he defines by reference to the English words "cheap, sham, common, smutty, pink-and-blue, high falutin', in bad taste."[24] The advertisement he describes depicts a scene in which a happy family gathers around a newly purchased radio set "(or a car, or a refrigerator, or table silver— anything will do)."

> The rich *poshlust* emanating from advertisements of this kind is due not to their exaggerating (or inventing) the glory of this or that serviceable article but to suggesting that the acme of human happiness is purchasable and that its purchase somehow ennobles the purchaser. Of course, the world they create is pretty

> harmless in itself because everybody knows that it is made up by the seller with the understanding that the buyer will join in the make-believe. The amusing part is not that it is a world where nothing spiritual remains except the ecstatic smiles of people eating celestial cereals or a world where the game of the senses is played according to bourgeois rules ("bourgeois" in the Flaubertian, *not* in the Marxist sense) but that it is a kind of satellite shadow world in the actual existence of which neither sellers nor buyers really believe in their heart of hearts—especially in this wise quiet country.[25]

The awkwardness of this passage likely derives from Nabokov's reluctance as an immigrant to openly criticize his newly adopted nation, especially during wartime. Nevertheless, the suggestion that happiness is purchasable and that the act of consumption is itself ennobling strikes directly at midcentury US ideology. For Nabokov, the answer to such "poshlust" is not to be found in Marxist theory but in a humanist appeal to an instinctive sense of authentic feeling that might pass as wisdom. The buyers and sellers enter into a consensual agreement to suspend disbelief, even while neither "believe in their heart of hearts" that smiles correspond to real happiness.

In *Lolita*, Nabokov offers us precisely the "shadow satellite world" that he describes in *Nikolai Gogol*, to the extent that he even has Humbert buy Dolores that portable radio set, in an attempt to conjure the happy family of the advertisement in substitution for the one he destroys.[26] "She believed," he reports, "with a kind of celestial trust, any advertisements or advice that appeared in *Movie Land* or *Screen Land*" (148). The word "celestial," like "believe," is recycled from the *Nikolai Gogol* passage we have discussed, and it brings us close to Beauvoir's use of "platonic heaven" as a figure for enchantment by US mass culture. But whereas the Nabokov of 1944 places faith in the ability of the "wise, quiet country" to remain unduped, Humbert here judges Dolores to be a naïve and gullible subject. This is why he constructs and maintains a shadow satellite world for her of fraudulent promises made through mass consumer culture—clothes and gadgets, junk food and sodas, novelty motels and tourist attractions. One of the novel's distinctive achievements is to disclose Dolores's superficial faith in the satellite world as itself an effective performance of happiness that derives from a survival instinct, a need not only to gratify her captor and moderate his violent treatment of her but also to preserve a semblance of normality for suspicious strangers.

The moment at which the illusion sustained by Dolores's performance is

decisively broken comes only in the final stages of the novel. "Now, I do not remember if I have mentioned that Lolita always had an absolutely enchanting smile for strangers," Humbert tells the reader, "a tender furry slitting of the eyes, a dreamy sweet radiance of all her features which did not mean a thing of course . . . it was never directed at the stranger in the room but hung in its own remote flowered void, so to speak, or wandered with myopic softness over chance objects" (285–86). In the incident Humbert remembers, this beautiful empty smile is performed for the father of a school friend, Avis, as they visit in Humbert's kitchen.

> While fat Avis sidled up to her papa, Lolita gently beamed at a fruit knife that she fingered on the edge of the table, whereon she leaned, many miles away from me. Suddenly, as Avis clung to her father's neck and ear while, with a casual arm, the man enveloped his large and lumpy offspring, I saw Lolita's smile lose all its light and become a frozen little shadow of itself, and the fruit knife slipped off the table and struck her with its silver handle a freak blow on the ankle which made her gasp, and crouch head forward, and then, jumping on one leg, her face awful with the preparatory grimace which children hold till the tears gush, she was gone—(286)

Confronted with a sentimental tableau of domestic unity, Dolores's smile, like Marlowe's rictus-grin or the lockjaw of Beauvoir's poster girl, becomes suddenly recognizable as reified, a "frozen shadow" on her face. "Shadow" refers us to the "shadow satellite world" of Nabokov's happily consuming family in the *Nikolai Gogol* passage and, once again, exemplifies the reversible quality of affect within this structure of feeling, by which a sign's affective promise can be inverted—happiness into suffering, sociality into loneliness—*while retaining its form.* As in Ahmed's theorization, it is the subject's relative positioning, "out of line" with a community, that enables this kind of affective conversion, in which shadows are viewed from oblique angles in relief, distinct from the objects that create them. Making shadowgraphs, we discover when Humbert picks up Lolita from summer camp, is one of the activities she pursues there, along with singing round the fire, "under the darned stars, where every girl merged her own spirit of happiness with the voice of the group" (114).[27]

Nabokov's other American fiction is replete with instances of this kind of affective conversion, from Pnin sobbing over the magazine joke he doesn't understand to Kinbote's irritation at the funfair, which disturbs him as he works on his notes for John Shade's poem. For the moment, though, I would like to turn to another émigré intellectual of the period, Hannah Arendt,

who provides a valuable and historically rooted account of the experience of becoming an affect alien in her 1943 essay "We Refugees." This piece begins with an articulation of the pressure felt by exiled German Jews to forget their pasts and to display positive affect in their public life in the United States. This process entailed a socially enforced silence about the concentration camps that many of them had experienced, since to talk about what had happened "might be interpreted as pessimism or lack of confidence in the new homeland. Besides, how often have we been told that nobody likes to listen to all that."[28] As the essay progresses, however, Arendt gradually reveals the contradictory and doubled affective structure that exiles have evolved as a means of coping with the social and institutional pressures exerted on them: "No, there is something wrong with our optimism. There are those odd optimists among us who, having made a lot of optimistic speeches, go home and turn on the gas or make use of a skyscraper in quite an unexpected way. They seem to prove that our proclaimed cheerfulness is based on a dangerous readiness for death . . . Since 1938—since Hitler's invasion of Austria—we have seen how quickly eloquent optimism could change to speechless pessimism. As time went on, we got worse—even more optimistic and even more inclined to suicide" (255). Arendt's extraordinary essay, following Giorgio Agamben's reading of it, has been largely understood in terms of the argument about statelessness and human rights that she pursued further in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). From a perspective shifted only slightly, however, "We Refugees" becomes an analysis of the historical event of affect conversion and its human consequences. In the passage quoted above, Arendt witnesses "how quickly eloquent optimism could change to speechless pessimism," evoking sudden bipolar switches of affect, but the possibility expressed in the next sentence is both more radical and more damaging. The suicidal tendencies and frenetic optimism among German Jews in the United States are not mutually exclusive but exist simultaneously as two faces of the same problem held in tension, the subject split into parts as a means of self-preservation: "Behind this front of cheerfulness, they constantly struggle with despair of themselves" (257). Once the idea of the affective "front" is established, Arendt can write of the need to "avoid anyone guessing who we are, what kind of passport we have, where our birth certificates were filled out—and that Hitler didn't like us" (257). The performance of happiness, for Arendt, becomes the most effective means by which to give the appearance of assimilation, while maintaining "under the cover of our optimism" a more

properly Jewish identity (260). This is the true meaning of Esteve's formulation of happiness as "the affective correlative of the nation-state." Nevertheless, since there is also a correlation between extreme optimism and extreme pessimism, the more convincing the performance becomes, the greater the risk of internal damage, a situation that creates a risk that the subject will feel compelled toward self-destruction and "make use of a skyscraper in quite an unexpected way."

Arendt's articulation of affective alienation reminds us of the close connections between the structure of feeling I have been tracing here and DuBoisian double consciousness. It was a failure of the transatlantic aliens discussed in this book that only Steinberg seemed to become conscious of such parallels between émigré and African American experience at midcentury, and even in his case it was in an unsystematic manner. The similarities we have noted between Steinberg's and Ellison's interest in invisibility and performance already point toward the possibilities that might be opened up by detailed comparative study of these two groups. For the present, however, it is sufficient to note how Jewish aliens for Arendt, as for Steinberg, covert, fragile and damaged though they are, represent an orientation toward the future, being at the "vanguard of their peoples—if they keep their identity" (262). In Agamben's account, this status develops from the way in which the alien represents "something like the pure man in himself," a demand for authentic human rights.[29] In view of the arguments of this book, however, I would suggest that there is room for a more hardboiled reading of Arendt's rather ambiguous claim, in which emphasis is placed on the practice of maintaining autonomy within institutionally determined limits. This practice would involve, as we have repeatedly seen, the creation of covers and fronts, split selves and grinning masks. The ability to preserve one's sense of free identity while continuing to observe shifting sets of institutional conventions is precisely what Arendt's essay asks of its readers and what places those who are successful at the vanguard of a commodified cultural field in the American postwar era.

This is a question of adaptation rather than assimilation, in the sense that adaptation entails the subject responding to changes in the environment with her own innovations, but only in order to protect deeper currents of continuity in her disposition. The key examples here would be Grosz's embrace of popular realism in order to maintain a Dadaist perspective on modernism and Chandler's decision to write detective fiction in order to remain an aesthete. We find ourselves some distance, then, from Adorno's recom-

mendation of austerity as the lifeboat in which a transatlantic alien might survive. Rather, what we have witnessed is a repeated process of entanglement, improvisation, and compromise. It is notable that in his response to *The Authoritarian Personality* (which in some accounts played an important part in persuading Adorno to return to Germany),[30] Edward Shils identified the book's principal defect as being its authors' blindness to the possibility of individual adaptability when confronted with institutional demands. "The entire discussion is very remote from the actual working of institutions," he complained. "The interviewers did not seek to obtain information about how the subjects actually behaved in their workshops or offices, in their churches and voluntary associations, in their trade union meetings, etc. The authors tell us nothing of the *actual* roles of their subjects and for this reason, they encounter no obstacles to their view that political conduct follows from personality traits."[31] These criticisms leveled at Adorno and the other authors of *The Authoritarian Personality* stand as a reminder of larger problems not only with the Frankfurt School's account of midcentury America but with the more heroic narratives of the intellectual migration and transatlantic modernism more generally. These narratives have always struggled to show how individual cultural products, from criticism to artworks, arise from and bear the shape of the limited autonomy that alien subjects find for themselves within institutional constraints of various types, from the state and cultural marketplace to particular publishers, museums, and the reviewing press.

Nowhere is this shaping of the artwork by its institutional constraints more visible than in Grosz's 1957 collage *Myself and New York* (plate 3), discussed in chapter 2, in which the artist turned bitterly against the self-mythologizing tendencies of Pollock, de Kooning, and the New York School that had dominated the artistic establishment for a decade. The New York art scene is revealed here as what it always was—show biz—and the artist himself is depicted as an androgynous showgirl, in contrast to the aggressive heterosexual masculinity of the abstract expressionists. *Myself and New York* also rehearses Marcel Duchamp's feminine alter ego, Rrose Sélavy, whose image adorned the perfume bottle featured in *Belle Haleine*, alongside the words "Paris—New York" (plate 1b). In this allusion, Grosz joins an avant-garde tradition in which, for a male European artist to enter the American marketplace, he must also cross-dress and eroticize himself. Grosz's distinctive contribution, however, is to replace Rrose Sélavy's seductive visage with that of a smiling clown, thus driving Duchamp's coy role

play into a mordant excess more appropriate to the cultural field of the 1950s, in which even the avant-garde has been reified, its irreverent playfulness transformed into a idiotic grin plastered on its face. The self-portrait places Grosz, then, within a complex narrative that draws together the histories of transatlantic Dada, the postwar American avant-garde, and the marketization of culture. *Myself and New York* captures a moment when, hemmed in on different sides by these institutional pressures, Grosz takes on all three in his performance, leaving only the insincerity of his forced smile as a perverse gesture of angry resistance to complicity.

The apotheosis of émigré affect conversion and role play comes finally with Saul Steinberg's mask series, which he began to produce in 1959 and continued throughout the early 1960s. These masks, made from brown paper bags with pencil and crayon details, were worn by Steinberg and his friends at "masquerades" held at their homes, and photographed by Inge Morath (see plate 8 and figure 18).[32] In his career, they mark the transition from the commercially dominated work of the 1940s and 1950s toward the more experimental work of his midcareer and represent, like Grosz's *Myself and New York*, both a self-conscious declaration of complicity with institutional demands for conformity and a paradoxical refusal to naturalize the performance demanded. As in the other examples, the tension is crystallized in the figure of the reified forced smile. Steinberg explained to *Life* magazine in 1965, in a feature that published a photograph of one of his masks:

> What people do, especially in America, is to manufacture a mask of happiness for themselves. They put a perpetual, reassuring smile on their faces; it makes them look nice, friendly and healthy, and we don't have to worry about them.
>
> In the photograph above I too am wearing a mask. I made it for myself, because I got spooked and fish-eyed when a photographer pointed a camera at me. So I made paper-bag masks of my face. I was able to relax inside the masks and show a constant public image of myself to the camera. Also, I had the satisfaction of having a photographer take a picture of a drawing of mine—not a reality, but a symbol—a fantasy created by me. So I used photography in a way that defeated its purpose. Instead of catching that famous fleeting moment, that peculiar expression on my face, I gave them something steady that I made.[33]

We have already traced the evolution of Steinberg's vanishing trick, his interest in espionage and anonymity, from his experience of anti-Semitism and his service during World War II. Arendt's "We Refugees" also emerges from this shared experience of historical persecution, but the breakthrough

Figure 18. Inge Morath, from "The Mask Series by Saul Steinberg," 1962. Masks by Saul Steinberg. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation © The Estate of Inge Morath/Magnum Photos.

of the mask series is that we find the artist reconfiguring his own alienation as a social problem for American society more broadly in a way that, to borrow Arendt's terminology, puts him at the "vanguard of his peoples." In these photographs the isolation of the artist and the exile is transformed from a solitary into a social event. This transformation is played out literally as a joke—the best of the photographs show a masked group gathered in a domestic living room with drinks. In the metaphorical sense conveyed in Steinberg's *Life* interview, however, wearing a mask of happiness in the American postwar is no longer an émigré problem, as it was for Arendt in 1943, or even a commercial one, as for Beauvoir's poster girls in 1947. It is simply *what people do*. This returns us to the terrain of Williams's structure of feeling and his desire to capture "a social experience which is still *in process*, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating."[34] Steinberg's masks offer us an insight into a specific moment of transformation in historical experience, when the structure of feeling we have identified with the intellectual in exile at midcentury is precipitated into definite social form, enters a new phase, and in becoming generalized transcends itself.

The masks are also important because they mark out an emergent aesthetic strategy. The artwork no longer runs in flight from the artificial smile but appropriates and inhabits it while nevertheless preserving the possibility of genuine affect by publicly banishing it to the concealed space behind. We have seen how Steinberg came in his later years to think of himself as a kind of hacker or virus disrupting the message systems of the mass media, and there is a hint of this in his idea here of "us[ing] photography in a way that defeated its purpose." With such limited room for maneuver among a set of entirely commodified positions, the artist performs his own objectification as a travesty. We are now in territory easily recognized as postmodern and pop. (Steinberg claimed to have anticipated pop art.)[35] In terms of the sociology of culture, however, we can say that Steinberg's masks represent a distinctive shift in disposition toward the way the art business is conventionally supposed to function. As Bourdieu describes it, in the economy of the restricted field for high culture, the practices by which one wins prestige and legitimacy "can only work . . . by pretending not to be doing what they are doing."[36] The nature of the game is such that those who succeed must appear to be oblivious that they are playing at all. Thus, the art business is a bad faith economy in the sense that the restricted field it operates in demands self-deception on the part of its agents, a "perfect submission to the laws of the field," since "agents perform more effectively the less aware they are of performing at all."[37] What we find in Steinberg's masks, however, is the conscious and willful appropriation of performance as a resource for modernism's survival or, to put it more succinctly, duplicity in good faith. Unlike the works that dominate the canon of pop art, Steinberg's masks hold onto the memory of authentic negative feeling but allow it to be glimpsed only in the image of a dazzling if grotesque smile.

Notes

Introduction. The Great Flight of Culture

1. "The Great Flight of Culture," *Fortune*, December 1941, 102.

2. The influential 1969 collection entitled *The Intellectual Migration* established the view that the exile of creative writers and artists in this period, unlike that of trained academics and scholars, had negligible interaction with American culture and little impact on the histories of literature and art more broadly. Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn, eds., *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930–1960* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Belknap, 1969), 5. Earlier studies included Franz L. Neumann, Henri Peyre, Erwin Panofsky, Wolfgang Köhler, and Paul Tillich, *The Cultural Migration: The European Scholar in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953), and Laura Fermi, *Illustrious Immigrants: The Intellectual Migration from Europe, 1930–41* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968). Later studies, which have overwhelmingly focused on German and German-speaking migrants, include Martin Jay, *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Anthony Heilbut, *Exiled in Paradise: German Refugee Artists and Intellectuals in America from the 1930s to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and Ehrhard Bahr, *Weimar on the Pacific: German Exile Culture in Los Angeles and the Crisis of Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). Two recent volumes of essays that break new ground by considering the German-speaking exiles in the context of American cultural history more broadly are Alexander Stephan, ed., *Exile and Otherness: New Approaches to the Experience of the Nazi Refugees* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005), and Sabine Eckmann and Lutz Koepnick, eds., *Caught by Politics: Hitler Exiles and American Visual Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

3. On Adorno and Mann's collaboration on *Doktor Faustus*, see Bahr, *Weimar on the Pacific*, 242–64.

4. The view of the French exiles as "waiting out" the war can be traced to Fleming and Bailyn, introduction to *Intellectual Migration*, 6. Dickran Tashjian's account of French surrealists in New York during World War II largely confirms the indifference of key figures

such as André Breton to American culture. Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen: Surrealism and the American Avant-Garde* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 176–234.

5. Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (London: Verso, 2004), 114.

6. Dwight Macdonald, "America! America!," *Dissent*, Autumn 1958, 313, 315.

7. Kenneth Fearing, "Man Versus Man," review of *Dangling Man*, by Saul Bellow, *New York Times Book Review*, March 26, 1944, 5.

8. See, e.g., Thomas Strychacz, *Modernism, Mass Culture, and Professionalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Kevin J. H. Dettmar and Stephen Watt, eds., *Marketing Modernisms: Self-Promotion, Canonization, Rereading* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); Aaron Jaffe, *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Loren Glass, *Authors Inc.: Literary Celebrity in the Modern United States, 1880–1980* (New York: New York University Press, 2004); and Jonathan Goldman, *Modernism Is the Literature of Celebrity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011). On the visual arts, see Michael FitzGerald, *Making Modernism: Picasso and the Creation of the Market for Twentieth-Century Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), and Thomas Crow, *Modern Art in the Common Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

9. In addition to the more materialist studies listed above, Andreas Huyssen argued in the Adornian tradition for the dialectical interrelationship of modernism and mass culture in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

10. Seth Moglen, *Mourning Modernity: Literary Modernism and the Injuries of American Capitalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

11. The most valuable primary source for the mass culture debates remains the collection of essays of the 1940s and 1950s assembled in Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White, eds., *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1957). A comparable collection is Norman Jacobs, ed., *Culture for the Millions? Mass Media in Modern Society* (Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand, 1961). See also Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989); Paul R. Gorman, *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); and Daniel Horowitz, *Consuming Pleasures: Intellectuals and Popular Culture in the Postwar World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

12. In this formulation, I am following cues set up in Fredric Jameson's discussion of "late modernism" as contructed by American ideologues in the early Cold War. Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London: Verso, 2002), 165–66.

13. George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring*

of American Culture in the Twentieth Century (London: Verso, 1997); Alan M. Wald, *American Night: The Literary Left in the Era of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

14. This despite Serge Guilbaut's pioneering history of the transatlantic field in painting, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). For a recent study addressing the transatlantic cultural field in a slightly later period, see Loren Glass, *Counterculture Colophon: Grove Press, the Evergreen Review, and the Incorporation of the Avant-Garde* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013). In my understanding of the value of reconceiving American literary and cultural history from a transatlantic perspective, I am indebted to the work of two British scholars in particular: Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), and Paul Giles, *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

15. "An Interview with Malraux," *Horizon* 12, no. 70 (October 1945): 240.

16. The closest Malraux came to achieving his vision was his involvement in the Congress for Cultural Freedom, discussed briefly in chapter 5.

17. For an introduction to the idea of the cultural field, see Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed," in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 29–73.

18. For examples of Bourdieu's use of "the space of possibles," see "The Field of Cultural Production," 30, 64.

19. On the restricted field, see Bourdieu's essays, "The Field of Cultural Production" and "Principles for a Sociology of Cultural Works," in *The Field of Cultural Production*, 29–73, 176–91.

20. On Bourdieu and the US cultural field, see Glass, *Authors Inc.*, 6. On Bourdieu and transnational literary studies, see Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

21. Bourdieu, "Principles for a Sociology," 187; cf. Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon," in *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian, vol. 1, *Perceptions and Judgments, 1939–1944* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 23–38.

22. Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* refers to a system "of principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them." Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 53. More concisely, he later referred to *habitus* as simply a "feel for the game." Pierre Bourdieu, "The Genesis of the Concepts of Habitus and Field," trans. Channa Newman, *Sociocriticism* 2, no. 2 (1985): 14.

23. See note 2.

24. George Grosz, *A Small Yes and a Big No*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (London: Allison and Busby, 1982), 194.

25. Walter Mosley, "Poisonville," in *A New Literary History of America*, ed. Werner Sollors and Greil Marcus (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 598.

26. *The Selected Letters of Raymond Chandler*, ed. Frank MacShane (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), 64.

27. Mosley, "Poisonville," 599.

28. Rainey, *Institutions*, 8.

29. On the notion of a "golden age" of science fiction, see Adam Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 195–229. On US science fiction in the context of the Cold War, see also David Seed, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), and M. Keith Booker, "Science Fiction and the Cold War," in *The Blackwell Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. David Seed (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 171–84. On the shift in legislative culture dealing with aliens in the early Cold War, see Michael Paul Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, the Movie: and Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 68–72.

30. William Phillips, *A Partisan View: Five Decades of the Literary Life* (New York: Stein and Day, 1983), 130.

31. Mary McCarthy, "Mlle Gulliver en Amérique," in *Critical Essays on Simone de Beauvoir*, ed. Elaine Marks (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1987), 45.

32. Booker, "Science Fiction."

33. See Rosemary Lloyd, *Baudelaire's World* (Ithaca, NJ: Cornell University Press, 2002), 33–51.

34. See, in particular, Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Device," in *Theory of Prose*, trans. Benjamin Sher (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990), 1–14.

35. Vladimir Nabokov, "Time and Ebb," *Atlantic Monthly*, January 1945, 81–83.

36. Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (London: Vintage, 1994), 44–45.

37. *Invasion of the Bodysnatchers*, dir. Don Siegel (1956; Paramount Home Entertainment, 2012).

38. Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967), 223.

39. Said, *Representations*, 39.

Chapter 1. Homeless Aliens and Dialectical Culture Critique

1. *Notes on Dialectics: Hegel, Marx, Lenin* (1948), *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In* (1953), and *American Civilization* (1993).

2. Paul Buhle, *C. L. R. James: The Artist as Revolutionary* (London: Verso, 1988), 106.

3. See, in particular, Selwyn R. Cudjoe's excoriating review of the *C. L. R. James Reader*, the first attempt to publish a representative selection of James's work, in which he remonstrated with its editor Anna Grimshaw, claiming that it "leaves James looking more like a cultural critic than the political thinker, philosopher and revolutionary organizer that he was." Cudjoe, "C. L. R. James Misbound," *Transition* 58 (1992): 126.

4. See the publication of a new edition of James's study of Melville in 2001: C. L. R. James, *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In*, intr. Donald E. Pease (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2001).

5. Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923–1950* (Boston: Little Brown, 1973); Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971).

6. Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (London: Vintage, 1994), 40, 41.

7. See, e.g., two recent special issues on Adorno: *Telos* 149 (2009); *New German Critique* 40, no. 1 (2013).

8. Theodor W. Adorno, "Scientific Experiences of a European Scholar in America," *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930–1960*, ed. Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Belknap, 1969), 369; C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 157.

9. Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 2009), 56.

10. Adorno, "Scientific Experiences," 341.

11. Michael Paul Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, the Movie: and Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 68.

12. Theodor W. Adorno, *Letters to His Parents, 1939–1951*, ed. Christoph Gödde and Henri Lonitz, trans. Wieland Hoban (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), 87.

13. Hannah Arendt, "We Refugees," in *Hitler's Exiles: Personal Stories of the Flight from Nazi Germany to America*, ed. Mark M. Anderson (New York: New Press, 1998), 255.

14. Adorno, *Letters to His Parents*, 88.

15. See Joshua Rayman, "Adorno's American Reception," *Telos* 149 (2009): 16. In particular, Rayman rehearses here the claim that Adorno's decision to leave the United States permanently was precipitated by Edward Shils's hostile review of *The Authoritarian Personality*, which appeared in 1954. On Adorno's surveillance by the FBI, see David Jenemann, *Adorno in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xii.

16. Charles J. Maland, *Chaplin and American Culture: The Evolution of a Star Image* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 280.

17. On James and the Nationalization and Immigration Act, see Donald E. Pease, introduction to James, *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways*, vii–xxxiii.

18. Cited in Anna Grimshaw and Keith Hart, introduction to C. L. R. James, *American Civilization*, ed. Anna Grimshaw and Keith Hart (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), 13.

19. Adorno, "Scientific Experiences," 367.

20. C. L. R. James, *Notes on Dialectics: Hegel, Marx, Lenin* (London: Allison and Busby, 1948), 98.

21. C. L. R. James, "The Star That Would Not Shine," in *At the Rendezvous of Victory: Selected Writings* (London: Allison and Busby, 1984), 11.

22. James, "The Star That Would Not Shine," 9.

23. On James's interest in Thackeray, see Andrew Smith, *C. L. R. James and the Study of Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 92–99. On his late introduction to Marx, see Stuart Hall, "A Conversation with C. L. R. James," in *Rethinking C. L. R. James*, ed. Grant Farred (Cambridge MA: Blackwell, 1996), 20.

24. Stuart Hall, "C. L. R. James: A Portrait," in *C. L. R. James's Caribbean*, ed. Paget Henry and Paul Buhle (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 5.

25. Hall, "Conversation," 16, 19.

26. C. L. R. James, *Letters from London: Seven Essays by C. L. R. James*, ed. Nicholas Laughlin (Oxford: Signal, 2003), 53. Further citations of this work are given in the text.

27. C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (London: Serpent's Tale, 2000), 42.

28. C. L. R. James, *The C. L. R. James Reader*, ed. Anna Grimshaw (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 151.

29. William Wordsworth, "Preface," in *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. Michael Mason (London: Longman, 1992), 59.

30. James, *Reader*, 152.

31. Richard Wright, *Black Boy (American Hunger): A Record of Childhood and Youth* (New York: Harper Perennial Classics, 1998), 384.

32. George Breitman, Paul le Blanc, and Alan Wald, *Trotskyism in the United States: Historical Essays and Reconsiderations* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996), 29. See also George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 225–67.

33. Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2005), 198.

34. Irving Howe, "On Comrade Johnson's American Resolution—or Soviets in the Sky," *Bulletin of the Workers Party* 1, no. 9 (March 28, 1946): 28.

35. James, *Reader*, 128.

36. James, *Reader*, 129.

37. Wordsworth, "Preface," 65, 64.

38. Dwight Macdonald, "A Theory of Popular Culture," *Politics* 1, no. 1 (February 1944): 22.

39. *Special Delivery: The Letters of C. L. R. James to Constance Webb, 1939–1948*, ed. Anna Grimshaw (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 226.

40. C. L. R. James, *Notes on Dialectics*, 98.

41. On the distinction between the two, see, e.g., Christopher J. Arthur, "Systematic Dialectic," in *Dialectics for the New Century: The New Frontier*, ed. Bertell Ollman and Tony Smith (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 211–20.

42. James, *American Civilization*, 118–65. On Lenin's notion of development as the struggle between opposites, see James's introduction to *Notes on Dialectics*, 7–11.

43. James, *American Civilization*, 132.

44. C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, rev. 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage, 1963), 55.

45. James, *Notes on Dialectics*, 136.

46. James, *American Civilization*, 164–65.

47. James, *Reader*, 228, 227.

48. Robert Warshow, "The Gangster as Tragic Hero," *Partisan Review* 15, no. 2 (1948): 244.

49. C. L. R. James [J. R. Johnson, pseud.], "*Native Son* and Revolution," *New International* 6, no. 4 (1940): 92–93.

50. Richard Wright, *Native Son* (New York: Harper and Row, 1940), 36.

51. Wright, *Native Son*, 141.

52. James, *American Civilization*, 148, 127.

53. James, *Notes on Dialectics*, 149.

54. James, *American Civilization*, 148.

55. James, *American Civilization*, 164.

56. C. L. R. James, *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In* (London: Allison and Busby, 1985), 102. Further citations of this work are given in the text.

57. Buhle, *C. L. R. James*, 110.

58. Daniel Horowitz, *Consuming Pleasures: Intellectuals and Popular Culture in the Postwar World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 120.

59. Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1967), 19. Among the revisionist studies of Adorno, see in particular Jenemann, *Adorno in America*, and the essays collected in the special issue of *Telos* 149 (2009) on "Adorno and America."

60. James, *Reader*, 228.

61. Adorno, *Prisms*, 127.

62. "Hegel violates his own concept of the dialectic, which should be defended against him, by not violating it, by closing it off and making it the supreme unity, free of contradiction." Theodor W. Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen, intr. Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jeremy J. Shapiro (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1993), 147.

63. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 26. Further citations of this work are given in the text.

64. James, *Reader*, 131.

65. Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution*, trans. Rose Strunsky (New York: International Publishers, 1925), 226.

66. James, *American Civilization*, 272.

67. Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (London: Verso, 2004), 81.

68. James, *Reader*, 227.

69. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 130.

70. Theodor W. Adorno, "The Radio Symphony," in *Radio Research: The Popular Music Industry*, ed. Paul Lazarsfeld and F. N. Stanton (New York: Arno, 1941), 112. For commentary on this important essay, see Robert Witkin, *Adorno on Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 2003), 122–29.

71. On radio music as advertisement for the station that plays it, see Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 128–29. For James's counterargument about the democratization of culture via increased accessibility across classes, see *American Civilization*, 132.

72. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 220.

73. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1979; New York: Routledge, 2013).

74. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 136.

75. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 157.

76. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 218.

77. Theodor W. Adorno, "Extorted Reconciliation: On Georg Lukács' *Realism in Our Time*," in *Notes to Literature*, vol. 1, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 216.

78. Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, 255.

79. Andrew Hoberek, *The Twilight of the Middle Class: Post-World War II Fiction and White-Collar Work* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

80. See, esp., James's 1944 essay, "The Americanization of Bolshevism," reprinted in *American Civilization*, 283–92.

81. Mills, *White Collar*, xx.

82. Mills, *White Collar*, xv. For James's brief remarks on white-collar work, see James, *American Civilization*, 197.

83. Mills, *White Collar*, xvi.

84. See "The Cultural Apparatus" (1956), in *Power Politics and People: The Collected Essays of C. Wright Mills*, ed. Irving Louis Horowitz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 405–22. For a different perspective on Adorno and Mills, see Peter

Hohendahl, "The Displaced Intellectual? Adorno's American Years Revisited," *New German Critique* 56 (1992): 91–92.

85. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 207.

86. See, in particular, Peter Drucker, *Concept of the Corporation* (New York: John Day, 1946).

87. Mills, *White Collar*, 159–60.

88. George Grosz, *A Small Yes and a Big No*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (London: Allison and Busby, 1982), 194.

89. *The Raymond Chandler Papers: Selected Letters and Non-Fiction, 1909–1959*, ed. Tom Hiney and Frank MacShane (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2000), 113.

90. Vladimir Nabokov, "The Creative Writer," *Bulletin of the Northeastern Modern Languages Association* 4, no. 1 (1942): 21.

91. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 28.

92. The term is used in Mills, "The Cultural Apparatus," 407–11.

93. James, *American Civilization*, 233. On existentialism in the United States in this period, see Ann Fulton, *Apostles of Sartre: Existentialism in America, 1945–1963* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999), and George Cotkin, *Existential America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

94. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 37. Further citations of this work are given in the text.

95. Nico Israel also indicates some of *Minima Moralia*'s debts to Proust and his transgressions of the division of labor in "Damage Control: Adorno, Los Angeles, and the Dislocation of Culture," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 10, no. 1 (1997): 85–113.

96. Adorno, "The Position of the Narrator in the Contemporary Novel," in *Notes to Literature*, vol. 1, 34.

97. *Entfremdung* is sometimes translated as "estrangement" in English but more commonly as "alienation." In what follows, I use *estrangement* strictly in its aesthetic sense.

98. Ernst Bloch, "Entfremdung, Verfremdung: Alienation, Estrangement," trans. Anne Halley and Darko Suvin, *Drama Review* 15, no. 1 (1970): 124. For Adorno's criticism of Brecht as didactic and authoritarian, and of Brechtian *Verfremdung*, see Theodor W. Adorno, "Commitment," trans. Francis McDonagh, *New Left Review* 87–88 (1974): 80–87.

99. Adorno, "Position of the Narrator," 32. For the original German, see Theodor W. Adorno, "Standort des Erzählers im zeitgenössischen Roman," in *Noten zur Literatur*, vol. 11 of *Gessamelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974), 43.

100. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 94.

101. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 43, 42.

102. Vladimir Nabokov, *Pnin* (New York: Everyman, 2004), 7.

103. Nabokov, *Pnin*, 27.

104. Italics in the original. Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (London: New Left Review, 1975), 366. I use this translation in preference to the more awkward one contained in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, *1833–44*, trans. Clemens Dutt (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975), 314.

105. Michael Wood, "The Kindness of Cruelty," in *Transitional Nabokov*, ed. Will Norman and Duncan White (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009), 229–44.

106. Christopher Isherwood, *A Single Man* (London: Penguin, 1969), 7. Further citations of this work are given in the text.

107. Adorno, "Short Commentaries on Proust," in *Notes to Literature*, 1:176.

Chapter 2. The Yankee from Berlin

1. See Grosz's autobiography, *A Small Yes and a Big No*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (London: Allison and Busby, 1982).

2. Grosz, *Small Yes*, 194.

3. "Autobiographical Statement," 1950, George Grosz Papers (MS Ger 206), folder 1042, Houghton Library, Harvard University. George Grosz Papers henceforth abbreviated as GGP.

4. Perhaps the most substantial treatment of Grosz as part of the Berlin Dada group is offered by Hanne Bergius, *"Dada Triumphs!" Dada Berlin, 1917–1923: Artistry of Polarities: Montages—Metamechanics—Manifestations*, trans. Brigitte Pichon, vol. 5 of *Crisis and the Arts: The History of Dada*, ed. Stephen C. Foster (Farmington Hills, MI: G. K. Hall, 2003).

5. See, e.g., Beth Irwin Lewis, *George Grosz: Art and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), and Barbara McCloskey, *George Grosz and the Communist Party: Art and Radicalism in Crisis, 1918–1936* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997). This trend has been reversed by Barbara McCloskey's recent monograph, *The Exile of George Grosz: Modernism, America, and the One World Order* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2015), which I was unfortunately unable to consult in time for it to inform the present study.

6. M. Kay Flavell, *George Grosz: A Biography* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987); *George Grosz: The Years in America, 1933–1958*, ed. Juerg M. Judin (Ostfildern: Hatje Kantz Verlag, 2009).

7. Barbara McCloskey, "Hauntings," in Judin, *George Grosz*, 19–20.

8. Juerg M. Judin, "Collages," in Judin, *George Grosz*, 234. On Grosz's exile as a process of disillusionment, see also Barbara McCloskey, "Cartographies of Exile," in *Exile and Otherness: New Approaches to the Experience of the Nazi Refugees*, ed. Alexander Stephan (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005), 135–52.

9. Siegfried Gohr, "George Grosz: A Dadaist in America," in George Grosz, *Collagen, 1928–1959* (München: Gallerie Fred Jahn, 2005), 10.

10. Arturo Schwartz, "An Interview with Man Ray: 'This Is Not for America,'" *Arts* 51, no. 9 (1977): 116.

11. Beeke Sell Tower, *Envisioning America: Prints, Drawings, and Photographs by George Grosz and his Contemporaries, 1915–1933* (Cambridge, MA: Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University, 1990), 63. On Grosz's *Americanismus* in his early work, see also Helen Adkins, "George Grosz and the American Dream," in *The 1920s: Age of the Metropolis*, ed. Jean Clair (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1991), 284–99.

12. Arthur Feiler, *America Seen Through German Eyes*, trans. Margaret Leland Goldsmith (New York: New Republic, 1928), 353. See also, e.g., André Siegfried, *America Comes of Age: A French Analysis*, trans. H. H. Hemming and Doris Hemming (London: Jonathan Cape, 1927).

13. Sell Tower, *Envisioning America*, 16.

14. Grosz, *Small Yes*, 179; Thomas Craven, *Modern Art: The Men, the Movement, the Meaning* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1935), 205. On the popularity and availability of nineteenth-century American frontier fiction in Germany at this time, see Ronald A. Fullerton, "Towards a Commercial Popular Culture in Germany: The Development of Pamphlet Fiction, 1871–1914," *Journal of Social History* 12, no. 4 (1979): 495.

15. George Grosz to Willis Thorton, January 23, 1947, GGP, folder 853.

16. Craven, *Modern Art*, 205.

17. Fullerton, "Towards a Commercial," 495.

18. Craven, *Modern Art*, 205.

19. Fullerton, "Towards a Commercial," 499–503.

20. Craven, *Modern Art*, 205.

21. Sell Tower, *Envisioning America*; Adkins, "George Grosz."

22. Craven, *Modern Art*, 205.

23. Hanne Bergius, "Dada, the Montage, and the Press: Catchphrase and Cliché as Basic Twentieth-Century Principles," in *Dada: The Coordinates of Cultural Politics,* ed. Stephen C. Foster, vol. 1 of *Crisis and the Arts: The History of Dada*, ed. Stephen C. Foster (New York: G. K. Hall / Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1996), 119. Chingachgook is the name of a character (a heroically presented Native American) from James Fenimore Cooper's "Leatherstocking tales," published between 1827 and 1841.

24. Richard O. Boyer, "The Yankee from Berlin," *New Yorker*, December 11, 1943, 36.

25. Brigid Doherty, "'See: *We Are All Neurasthenics!*' or, The Trauma of Dada Montage," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 1 (1997): 108–11.

26. Mary Nolan, *Visions of Modernity: American Business and the Modernization of Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 5–9.

27. Nolan, *Visions of Modernity*, 9.

28. See, e.g., André Siegfried: "Why, I ask, are Americans so productive in material, technical or administrative achievements, and why, until recently, have they produced so little as far as beauty and mental progress is concerned?" Siegfried, *America Comes of Age*, 262.

29. See John Czaplicka, "*Amerikabilder* and the German Discourse on American Civilization," in Sell Tower, ed. *Envisioning America*, 46.

30. McCloskey, *George Grosz and the Communist Party*, 26; Bergius, *Dada Triumphs!*, 119, 127.

31. Czaplicka, "*Amerikabilder*," 45.

32. George Grosz and Wieland Herzefelde, "Art is in Danger," trans. Gabriele Bennett, in *Dadas on Art*, ed. Lucy R. Lippard (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1971), 81.

33. Fullerton, "Towards a Commercial," 496.

34. Wilbur R. Miller, "From Old Cap Collier to Nick Carter; or, Images of Crime and Criminal Justice in American Dime Novel Detective Stories, 1880–1920," in *Crime and Culture: An Historical Perspective*, ed. Amy Gilman and René Lévy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 200.

35. Grosz's role-playing invites comparison with an American Dadaist he came to admire, Arthur Cravan. On Cravan's irrational performances, see Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 172–75.

36. Paul Giles, *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 1–2.

37. McCloskey, *George Grosz and the Communist Party*, 24.

38. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 136.

39. McCloskey, *George Grosz and the Communist Party*, 26.

40. Grosz, *Small Yes*, 180.

41. Sell Tower, *Envisioning America*, 83n.

42. Westheim, "George Grosz," *Broom* 4, no. 3 (1923): 164.

43. Cited in Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, trans. David Britt (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 107.

44. Boyer, "The Yankee from Berlin," 43.

45. For general accounts of New York Dada, see Francis F. Naumann, *New York Dada, 1915–1923* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994); Martin Ignatius Gaughan, ed., *Dada New York: New World for Old*, vol. 8 of *Crisis and the Arts: The History of Dada*, ed. Stephen C. Foster (Farmington Hills, MI: G. K. Hall, 2003).

46. "French Artists Spur on an American Art," *New York Tribune*, October 24, 1915, sec. 4, 2.

47. For an indication of Duchamp's impulse toward a cerebral, intellectualized

Dadaism, see James Johnson Sweeney, interview with Marcel Duchamp, in Lippard, *Dadas on Art*, 141–42. We might seek closer parallels between Grosz and more marginal figures on the New York Dada scene, such as Arthur Cravan and Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven, whose irrational and bodily performances opened onto a chaotic New York repressed by more canonical artists. See Jones, *Irrational Modernism.*

48. McCloskey, *George Grosz and the Communist Party.*

49. McCloskey, "Hauntings," 12.

50. Gohr, "George Grosz," 11.

51. George Grosz diary, 1932, GGP, folder 1083.

52. George Grosz, "Briefe aus Amerika III," *Kunst und Künstler* 31, no. 12 (1932): 434. All quotations from this letter are my translations.

53. The *Lustmord* genre practiced by Grosz, Otto Dix, and others depicted scenes of rape and dismemberment. See Maria Tatar, *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

54. For a discussion of *Freaks*, see Thomas Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema, 1930–1934* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 312–17.

55. Grosz, "Briefe aus Amerika III," 435–36.

56. George Grosz, "On German Art" (1933), GGP, folder 1019. Grosz also cited Bosch and Breughel as models for a new German art in a 1931 article he wrote just before leaving for the United States, "Unter Anderem ein Wort für deutsche Tradition," *Kunstblatt* 15 (1931): 79–84.

57. Grosz, *Small Yes*, 190.

58. Grosz, "Briefe aus Amerika III," 436.

59. Grosz, "Briefe aus Amerika III," 436.

60. Grosz, "On German Art."

61. Richard Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer*, ed. Hans J. Kleinschmidt, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 70.

62. As Lary May argues, in the United States the early 1930s saw a shift toward understanding movie theaters as democratic spaces for the American people to enjoy their national art form without subjection to hierarchical distinctions, reflected, for example, in seating arrangements. Lary May, *The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 101–35.

63. George Grosz, "Briefe aus Amerika I," *Kunst und Künstler* 31, no. 8 (1932): 274. My translation.

64. George Grosz, *Briefe, 1913–1959*, ed. Herbert Knust (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1979), 148.

65. See George Grosz, "George Groß," trans. Christina Mills, *The Dada Reader: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Dawn Ades (London: Tate, 2006), 308.

66. George Grosz, "On Teaching Art" (1932–33), GGP, folder 1018.

67. George Grosz, "What Can Art Education Convey?" (1934), GGP, folder 1024.

68. Grosz, "On Teaching Art."

69. On the enforcement of the Production Code, see Matthew Bernstein, *Controlling Hollywood: Censorship and Regulation in the Studio Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999).

70. See Fullerton, "Towards a Commercial," 500–503; Thomas J. Saunders, *Hollywood in Berlin: American Cinema and Weimar Germany* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1994), 23.

71. George Grosz, "On Art Education" (May 1935), GGP, folder 1025.

72. Michael Kammen, *The Lively Arts: Gilbert Seldes and the Transformation of Cultural Criticism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 102–4.

73. Gilbert Seldes, *The 7 Lively Arts*, rev. 2nd ed. (New York: Sagamore Press, 1957), 294.

74. Alexander King, Gilbert Seldes, and George Grosz, "Editorial," *Americana*, November 1932, n. p.

75. George Grosz, "Briefe aus Amerika II," *Kunst und Künstler* 31, no. 9 (1932): 321–22. My translation. I have retained here Grosz's use of a series of ellipses.

76. Herbert Hoover, *American Individualism* (London: Heinemann, 1923), 64. On the influence of Hoover's economic ideas on American consumerism in this period, see William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon, 1993), 349–90.

77. John Dewey, *Individualism Old and New* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931), 21

78. Stuart Chase, *A New Deal* (New York: MacMillan, 1932), 66.

79. Martin Rubin, "The Crowd, the Collective, and the Chorus: Busby Berkeley and the New Deal," in *Movies and Mass Culture*, ed. John Belton (London: Athlone, 1996), 83.

80. George Grosz, "Unter Anderem ein Wort," 84. My translation.

81. Tristan Tzara, "Dada Manifesto 1918," in *Seven Dada Manifestos and Lampidisteries*, trans. Barbara Wright (London: Calder, 1992), 9.

82. For an overview of anthropological thinking about American culture in the 1930s, see Susan Hegeman, *Patterns for America: Modernism and the Concept of Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

83. Erika Doss, *Twentieth-Century American Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 111.

84. Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880–1940* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 122.

85. Shaffer, *See America First*, 142.

86. On the ideological function of the *Heimatroman*, see Jochen Shulte-Sasse and Linda Shulte-Sasse, "Toward a 'Culture' for the Masses: The Socio-Psychological

Function of Popular Literature in Germany and the US, 1880–1920," in *Mass Culture in Imperial Germany, 1871–1918*, ed. Peter U. Hohendahl, *New German Critique* 29 (1983): 91–92.

87. George Grosz to "Miss Hughes," March 11, 1949, GGP, folder 654.

88. Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 17, trans. and ed. James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud and assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson (London: Vintage, 2001), 223.

89. Grosz, "Unter Anderem ein Wort," 84.

90. Anonymous, "Chameleon City: An Artist Tours the World, without Leaving Manhattan," *Vanity Fair*, November 1934, 37.

91. Grosz, *Small Yes*, 192.

92. In *A Small Yes and a Big No*, Grosz shared his admiration for other illustrators, including Dean Cornwell and Harold von Schmidt, who were best known for their work in middlebrow magazines such as *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Good Housekeeping*. The artist he most often admired, however, was the epitome of homespun American middlebrow, Norman Rockwell. Grosz, *Small Yes*, 194. See also Richard O. Boyer, "A Demon in the Suburbs," *New Yorker*, November 27, 1943, 33.

93. See entries in George Grosz diaries for August 8, 1934, and September 6, 1934, GGP, folder 1085.

94. Catherine Gudis, *Buyways: Billboards, Automobiles, and the American Landscape* (New York: Routledge, 2004), surveys the influence of modernist art on American advertising in the 1920s, concluding that the majority of agencies remained formally conservative in their tastes.

95. Grosz, *Small Yes*, 194.

96. Grosz, *Small Yes*, 199.

97. Timothy Bewes, *Reification, or the Anxiety of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2002), 82.

98. See Tama Starr and Edward Hayman, *Signs and Wonders: The Spectacular Marketing of America* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 50–54, 69–97; Leach, *Land of Desire*, 338–44.

99. Grosz, *Briefe aus Amerika* II, 321.

100. Stephen C. Foster, "Disaster and the Habits of Culture," in Foster, *Dada: The Coordinates of Cultural Politics*, 2.

101. George Grosz to Ben Hecht, June 30, 1934, GGP, folder 634. I have corrected various of the spelling errors that frequently occurred when Grosz wrote English. The ellipses are his, being a characteristic feature of his informal writing style in both German and English.

102. C. J. Bulliet, "Grosz 'Slipping'?" *Art Digest*, April 15, 1933, 32. Other reviews from this time were concerned by the softening of Grosz's satirical bite. For example, Marsden Hartley noted the characteristic ambivalence of the New York watercolors

of 1933–34, writing that, "if Grosz is perhaps kinder in these American satires . . . he entertains the hope of being one of us." Hartley, "'American Scene' Is Not Flattering," *Art Digest*, April 1, 1935, 8.

103. The rising popularity of European modernism in the United States between the wars is a narrative Grosz was later to tell in his 1958 entry on American art for the *American People's Encyclopedia*, relating how Stieglitz exploited the impact of the famous Armory Show and "did much to arouse the American public to an interest in modern art—though it was an interest lacking understanding." While the best American artists were lured to Paris, "Americans at home, prone to the worship of the new as such, were entranced—especially as the most daring forms were coming from Paris." "The Arts in America" (1957), GGP, folder 1060. Serge Guilbaut takes up this narrative from the mid-1930s in *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

104. George Grosz to Arnold Gingrich, June 15, 1936, GGP, folder 596.

105. For an account of the exhibition, see www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2008/dadaatmoma/. Accessed September 18, 2010. Three works from Grosz's Dada period were exhibited: *The Gold-digger* (1917), an untitled drawing (1917), and the collage/watercolor *The Engineer Heartfield* (1920). Although Grosz's photomontages were not included, the exhibition did feature several by his fellow Berlin Dadaists, Raoul Hausmann and Hannah Höch. See Alfred H. Barr, ed., *Fantastic Art, Dada Surrealism* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936).

106. Grosz, *Small Yes*, 200.

107. Bergius, "Dada, the Montage, and the Press," 111.

108. Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, 155.

109. "Hays Declares Gang Films Are Right of Free Screen," *Motion Picture Herald*, July 4, 1931, 9.

110. Huelsenbeck, *Dada Drummer*, 187. Further citations of this work are given in the text.

111. On the Dallas project, see Barbara McCloskey, "Exile for Hire: George Grosz in Dallas," in *Caught by Politics: Hitler Exiles and American Visual Culture*, ed. Sabine Eckmann and Lutz Koepnick (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 33–60.

112. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 49.

113. Georges Hugnet, "The Dada Spirit in Painting," in *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Motherwell, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Belknap, 1981), 147.

114. On the Associated American Artists, see Erika Doss, "Catering to Consumerism: Associated American Artists and the Marketing of Modern Art, 1934–1958," *Winterthur Portfolio* 26, no. 2–3 (1991): 144–67.

115. "Reflections" (1948), folder 1037; George Grosz to George Biddle, March 17, 1949, folder 522; "The Arts in America" (1957), folder 1060, GGP.

116. Gohr, "George Grosz," 14.

117. Theodor W. Adorno, *Beethoven and the Philosophy of Music*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 153, 152.

118. Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1983), 171.

119. Hugo Ball, *Flight out of Time: A Dada Diary*, ed. John Elderfield, trans. Ann Raimes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 129.

Chapter 3. The Big Empty

1. *The Selected Letters of Raymond Chandler*, ed. Frank MacShane (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981), 61, 128. Henceforth abbreviated *SL*. Further citations are provided parenthetically in the text.

2. "Free Speech and Tea," *Life Magazine*, June 3, 1940, 78.

3. Old School Ties are of a different design than School Ties, entitled to be worn only by former pupils after leaving their public school.

4. Frank MacShane, *The Life of Raymond Chandler* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976), 21.

5. See, e.g., William Marling, *Raymond Chandler* (Boston, MA: Twayne, 1986), 152.

6. *The Notebooks of Raymond Chandler*, ed. Frank MacShane (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), 23. Henceforth abbreviated *NRC*. Further citations are given parenthetically in the text.

7. MacShane, *Life of Raymond Chandler*, 73.

8. Leonard Cassuto, e.g., sees the three main influences on the development of hardboiled writing as the plot of the mystery story first pioneered by Poe, determinist styles of American naturalist fiction such as that of Theodor Dreiser, and the vernacular styles of Hemingway and Hammett. Cassuto, *Hard-Boiled Sentimentality: The Secret History of American Crime Stories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 4.

9. Paula Rabinowitz, *Black and White and Noir: America's Pulp Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 6.

10. Sean McCann, *Gumshoe America: Hardboiled Detective Fiction and the Rise and Fall of New Deal Liberalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 147.

11. Andrew Pepper, "The Hardboiled Genre," in *A Companion to Crime Fiction*, ed. Charles J. Rzepka and Lee Horsley (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2010), 140.

12. Morrow Mayo, *Los Angeles* (New York: Knopf, 1933), 326.

13. Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, "The New Modernist Studies," *PMLA* 123, no. 3 (2008): 737–48.

14. See Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel, "Introduction: The Global Horizons of Modernism," in *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity*, ed. Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 4. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker also discuss the notion of a "disjunctive" modernism emerging from colonialism, postcolonialism, and globalization in the introduction to *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces*, ed. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (London: Routledge, 2005), 1–5.

15. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "The Otherwise Modern: Caribbean Lessons from the Savage Slot," in *Critically Modern: Alternatives, Alterities, Anthropologies*, ed. Bruce M. Knauft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 222.

16. Raymond Chandler, *Later Novels and Other Writings*, ed. Frank MacShane (New York: Library of America), 268.

17. See, e.g., the flurry of responses to Edmund Wilson's famous attack on detective fiction as "literature" in 1944. Edmund Wilson, "Why do People Read Detective Stories?" and "Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?" in *Classics and Commercials: A Literary Chronicle of the Forties* (London: W. H. Allen, 1951), 231–43, 257–65. Bernard de Voto's response was published as "Easy Chair," *Harper's Magazine* 190 (1944): 34–37. See also André Gide, "American Writing Today: An Imaginary Interview," *New Republic*, February 7, 1944, 184–86; Somerset Maugham, "The Decline and Fall of the Detective Story," in *The Vagrant Mood* (London: Mandarin, 1993), 76–101.

18. See Marling, *Raymond Chandler*; Peter Wolfe, *Something More Than Night: The Case of Raymond Chandler* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1985).

19. Chandler, *Later Novels*, 515–16.

20. Herman Melville, *Pierre, Israel Potter, The Piazza Tales, The Confidence Man, Uncollected Prose, Billy Budd* (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1161.

21. Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

22. Fredric Jameson noted that "it was his distance from the American language which gave him the chance to use it as he did." Jameson, "On Raymond Chandler," in *The Critical Response to Raymond Chandler*, ed. J. K. Van Dover (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1995), 66.

23. Review of *The English Language in America*, by George Philip Krapp, *Times Literary Supplement*, January 21, 1926, 40.

24. Virginia Woolf, "American Fiction," in *Collected Essays*, vol. 2 (London: Hogarth, 1966), 120–21.

25. Raymond Chandler, *Stories and Early Novels* (New York: Library of America, 1995), 594.

26. H. L. Mencken, *The American Language: An Enquiry into the Development of English in the United States*, 4th ed. (New York: Knopf, 1941), 608.

27. *The American Language* ran numerous revised and expanded editions after the

success of its first, in 1919. Mencken founded *Black Mask* in 1920 and formed part of a circle of celebrity writers including Fitzgerald and Hemingway.

28. Chandler, *Stories and Early Novels*, 771, 796.

29. Michael Kammen, *American Culture, American Tastes: Social Change and the Twentieth Century* (New York: Knopf, 1999).

30. Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1996).

31. *The Raymond Chandler Papers: Selected Letters and Non-Fiction, 1909–1959*, ed. Tom Hiney and Frank MacShane (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2000), 71.

32. Van Wyck Brooks, "America's Coming of Age," in *The Early Years: A Selection from His Works, 1908–1921*, ed. Claire Sprague (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 79–158.

33. Susan Hegeman, *Patterns for America: Modernism and the Concept of Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 74ff.

34. Denning, *Cultural Front*, 42–43. On the left avant-garde of this period in their "war of position" against the cultural establishment, see also Walter Kalaidjian, *American Culture Between the Wars: Revisionary Modernism and Postmodern Critique* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

35. McCann, *Gumshoe America*, 149.

36. Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 79.

37. Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 111.

38. On the emergence of a fully fledged mass culture in the immediate postwar, see Kammen, *American Culture*, 57ff.

39. Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 69.

40. Charles Baudelaire, "Further Notes on Edgar Poe," in *Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, trans. P. E. Charvet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 189.

41. David Weir, *Decadent Culture in the United States: Art and Literature Against the American Grain, 1890–1926* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 1.

42. Louis Adamic, *Laughing in the Jungle: The Autobiography of an Immigrant in America* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1932), 219.

43. Mayo, *Los Angeles*, 327, 329.

44. These motifs are most fully worked through in Charles J. Rzepka, "'I'm in The Business Too': Gothic Chivalry, Private Eyes, and Proxy Sex and Violence in Chandler's *The Big Sleep*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 46, no. 3 (2000): 695–724.

45. Chandler, *Stories and Early Novels*, 747.

46. See, also, Stanley Orr, *Darkly Perfect World: Colonial Adventure, Postmodernism, and American Noir* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2010), 75.

47. On tropical plants as decadent motif in European literature, see Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 53.

48. Chandler, *Stories and Early Novels*, 593; Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature*, trans. Richard Baldick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959), 98.

49. Edmund Wilson, *Classics and Commercials*, 47.

50. Chandler, *Later Novels*, 268.

51. As Bernard de Voto wrote, crime fiction was supposed to be "the only current form of fiction which is pure story." Voto, "The Easy Chair," 37.

52. Chandler, *Later Novels*, 116; *Stories and Early Novels*, 1055.

53. On Chandler and the neon light, see William Brevda, "The Double Nihilation of the Neon: Raymond Chandler's Los Angeles," *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 41, no. 1 (1999): 70-102.

54. Raymond Chandler, "The Phrasemaker," in *Chandler Before Marlowe: Raymond Chandler's Early Prose and Poetry, 1908-1912*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1973), 75.

55. T. S. Eliot, "Swinburne as Poet," in *Selected Essays* (London: Faber, 1999), 323.

56. Chandler, "The Phrasemaker," 75.

57. Marling, *Raymond Chandler*, 9.

58. Chandler, "The Phrasemaker," 76.

59. Raymond Chandler, "Realism and Fairyland," in *Chandler Before Marlowe*, 67.

60. *SL*, 203-4, 293.

61. *Correspondance 1850-1859*, vol. 13 of *Oeuvres complètes de Gustave Flaubert* (Paris: Club de l'Honnêt homme, 1974), 154.

62. Chandler, *Stories and Early Novels*, 709.

63. Mencken, *American Language*, 94, 556-57.

64. Chandler, *Later Novels*, 271.

65. Chandler, *Later Novels*, 989.

66. Walter Pater, *Appreciations, with an Essay on Style* (London: Macmillan, 1911), 9-10.

67. Pater, *Appreciations*, 10.

68. T. S. Eliot, "Contemporary English Prose," *Vanity Fair* 20, no. 5 (1923): 51.

69. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 18.

70. MacShane, *The Life of Raymond Chandler*, 249.

71. There are two pages devoted to it in Marling, *Raymond Chandler* (pp. 71-72), but they are mostly taken up with synopsis.

72. Chandler, *Later Novels*, 733.

73. Although the bombing raids were undertaken jointly by the RAF and USAAF, Chandler seems to have understood Britain to have been responsible for them in a way the United States was not. Britain was the principal instigator of the strategy, having issued the Area Bombing Directive in 1942, which stated that bombing should be focused on the morale of the enemy civilian population. Chandler may have been aware, too, of the public justifications for civilian-targeted bombing proposed by Air Marshall Arthur "Bomber" Harris, who declared not to believe "the destruction of every German city worth the bones of one British Grenadier." Norman Longmate, *The*

Bombers: The RAF Offensive Against Germany 1939–1945 (London: Arrow, 1988), 346. By contrast, American sensitivities to the ethical implications of strategic bombing were publically emphasized throughout the campaign. Tami Davis Biddle, "Wartime Reactions," in *Firestorm: The Bombing of Dresden, 1945*, ed. Paul Addison and Jeremy A. Crang (London: Pimlico, 2006), 102.

74. Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 227–54.

75. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, 230.

76. Between 1870 and 1900, Britain added to its empire 750,000 square miles in Asia and the South Pacific, and 4,400,000 square miles in Africa. See Nicholas Daly, *Modernism, Romance, and the "Fin-de-Siècle": Popular Fiction and British Culture, 1880–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 32.

77. P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Crisis and Deconstruction, 1914–1990* (London: Longman, 1993), 3.

78. Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 285.

79. *Raymond Chandler Papers*, 255.

80. *SL*, 20, 183.

81. Orr, *Darkly Perfect World*, 53–87.

82. For a survey of the fin-de-siècle defenses of romance, see Anna Vaninskaya, "The Late-Victorian Romance Revival: A Generic Excursus," *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920* 50, no. 1 (2008): 63–65.

83. Raymond Chandler, "Realism and Fairyland," 66.

84. Chandler, "Tropical Romance," in *Chandler Before Marlowe*, 68.

85. Daly, *Modernism*, 4.

86. MacShane, *Life of Raymond Chandler*, 250.

87. Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, and Postmodernism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988).

88. W. H. Auden, "The Guilty Vicarage: Notes on the Detective Story, by an Addict," *Harpers Magazine*, May 1948, 408.

89. *Raymond Chandler Papers*, 113.

90. *Raymond Chandler Papers*, 113.

91. William Barrett, "The Resistance," *Partisan Review* 13, no. 4 (1946): 483; *SL*, 59.

92. McCann, *Gumshoe America*, 172.

93. Maugham, *Vagrant Mood*, 76.

94. *SL*, 48, 114.

95. See, e.g., *SL*, 277.

96. Key texts for mapping the coordinates of the "New Modernist Studies" include Mao and Walkowitz, "The New Modernist Studies," as well as their "Introduction: Modernisms Bad and New," in *Bad Modernisms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 1–18. The collection *Disciplining Modernism*, ed. Pamela Caughie (Basingstoke: Palgrave,

2009), also indicates the expanding definitions of modernism, to include, e.g., classical Hollywood cinema (Miriam Bratu Hansen, "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism," 242–58). See also Doyle and Winkiel, "Introduction: The Global Horizons of Modernism," 1–14.

97. Stephen Ross, "Uncanny Modernism, Or Analysis Interminable," in *Disciplining Modernism*, 33–52.

98. This confusion was effectively conveyed in Susan Stanford Friedman's essay "Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of Modern/Modernity/Modernism," in which the terminology of the discipline becomes "a critical Tower of Babel, a cacophony of different categories that become increasingly useless the more inconsistently they are used," *Modernism/modernity* 8, no. 3 (2001): 497. In 2009, Friedman's essay provided the opening contribution for *Disciplining Modernism*, a collection of essays that demonstrated that consensus on definitional questions remained unattainable.

Chapter 4. The Taste of Freedom

1. Simone de Beauvoir, *America Day by Day*, trans. Carol Cosman (London: Victor Gollancz, 1998), 15. All further citations of this work are given parenthetically in the text.

2. Vladimir Nabokov, *The Annotated Lolita*, ed. Alfred Appel Jr. (London: Penguin, 1995), 152. All further citations of this work are given parenthetically in the text.

3. Cotton Seiler, *Republic of Drivers: A Cultural History of Automobility in America* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008), 99.

4. Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880–1940* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2001).

5. Shaffer, *See America First*, 317.

6. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (London: André Deutsch, 1970), 2. Sociologists in the 1940s and 1950s voiced comparable concerns over the negative effect of economic growth and the culture industry on the notion of freedom in the United States. See Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1941); Geoffrey Gorer, *The Americans: A Study in National Character* (New York: Norton, 1948); David Riesman, with Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1950); David Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954).

7. Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: Norton, 1998), 249.

8. Nabokov, *Lolita*, 158; Beauvoir, *America Day by Day*, 250.

9. Simone de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, trans. Richard Howard (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 132–33, 358.

10. See, e.g., William Phillips's indignant comments in *A Partisan View: Five De-*

cades of the Literary Life (New York: Stein and Day, 1983), 125: "To some extent her ignorance of American writing reflected the ignorance and parochialism of the French, who regarded the rest of the world as an intellectual colony of France."

11. Ann Fulton, *Apostles of Sartre: Existentialism in America, 1945–1963* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 11. On the early reception of existentialism in the United States, see also George Cotkin, *Existential America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

12. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life*, trans. Peter Green (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 140.

13. Simone Weil, *On Science, Necessity and the Love of God*, ed. and trans. Richard Rees (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 109.

14. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), 116.

15. On the commodification of the Niagara Falls in this period, see Ginger Strand, *Inventing Niagara: Beauty, Power, and Lies* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008).

16. Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 155, xix.

17. Boorstin, *The Image*, 6, 19.

18. It is notable that Boorstin alludes enthusiastically to *Lolita* in his discussion of American motels, "which Vladimir Nabokov has brilliantly caricatured." Boorstin, *The Image*, 114. Diane Rubenstein also notes how *America Day by Day* anticipates Baudrillard's hyperreal in "'I Hope I Am Not Fated to Live in Rochester': America in the Work of Beauvoir," *Theory and Event* 15, no. 2 (2012).

19. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Citadel Press, 1976), 12.

20. See Daniel Miller's argument that "the problem with a concern with objects that are more transient, or a concern with the surface of style, is that it comes up against one of the most fundamental tenets of Western philosophy—the critique of superficiality . . . But there is no reason why important issues of identity, and indeed of ontology, should not be conceptually located in both transient and surface-orientated modes." Miller, "Consumption as the Vanguard of History: A Polemic by Way of an Introduction," in *Acknowledging Consumption: A Review of New Studies*, ed. Daniel Miller (London: Routledge, 1995), 25. Beauvoir's claims here anticipate Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's later enthusiasm for the "American Rhizome" in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004), 21–22.

21. See Penelope Deutscher, *The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir: Ambiguity, Conversion, Resistance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 59–93; Sonia Kruks, *Simone de Beauvoir and the Politics of Ambiguity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 74–81; Sarah Relyea, *Outsider Citizens: The Remaking of Postwar Identity in Wright, Beauvoir, and Baldwin* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 39–57.

22. Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*, 20.

23. Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*, 87–88.

24. "Des divertissements où celle-ci achève de se perdre." *Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), 123.

25. Jean Baudrillard later noted a similar paradox in the social function of the automobile in postwar America, by which the car is heralded by society as the harbinger of unlimited individualist freedom just as automobility is subject to "the desperate call to collective responsibility and social morality, and increasingly severe restraints." Baudrillard, "Consumer Society," in *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader*, ed. Lawrence B. Glickman (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 53.

26. Beauvoir, *America Day by Day*, 289, 290.

27. Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*, 135. At the famous conclusion of *Lolita*, it is precisely the sound of laughing children at play, and "the absence of [Lolita's] voice from that concord," which marks Humbert's supposed moral epiphany (308).

28. Beauvoir, *Prime of Life*, 140.

29. Beauvoir, *America Day by Day*, 278; Nabokov, *Lolita*, 136–37.

30. Nabokov, *Lolita*, 65, 69.

31. Nabokov, *Lolita*, 170. See Rachel Bowlby's observation that "Everyone in the novel is seen and evaluated, and sees and evaluates themselves, at two removes or more, according to their acting of parts copied from parts acted in movies or bestselling stories." Bowlby, *Shopping with Freud* (London: Routledge, 1993), 63. The proto-postmodern circuits of Hollywood images which seem to evacuate all sense of authentic interiority from both Humbert and Lolita are also discussed by Karen Jacobs in *The Eye's Mind: Literary Modernism and Visual Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 264–80.

32. Beauvoir's publications in 1947 included essays in *Harper's Bazaar*, as well as more highbrow journals such as *Politics* and *Partisan Review.* In 1946–47, *Time*, *Life*, and *The Saturday Review of Literature* published articles that introduced existentialism to the uninitiated. For a detailed account of the popular reception of existentialism in the United States between 1945 and 1948, see Fulton, *Apostles of Sartre*, 2–37.

33. Nabokov, *Lolita*, 15–16. Nabokov was familiar with the intellectual scene in Paris during the late 1930s, having moved there from Berlin in 1937. The Deux Magots was famous for providing a meeting point for existentialist intellectuals at this time, including Beauvoir, Sartre, and André Gide (who is likely the "uranist" Nabokov has in mind). For Beauvoir's reflections on Soviet film from this period, see Beauvoir, *Prime of Life*, 47. If Beauvoir is right in claiming that she read "every issue of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*" during this time (*Prime of Life*, 48), then she read Nabokov's essay "Pouchkine ou le vrai et le vraisemblable," published there in March 1937.

34. Vladimir Nabokov, "Sartre's First Try," *New York Times Review of Books*, April 24, 1949, 3, 19.

35. On *Lolita*'s engagement with the Holocaust, see Douglas Anderson, "Nabo-

kov's Genocidal and Nuclear Holocausts in *Lolita*," *Mosaic* 29, no. 2 (1996): 73–90; Susan Mizruchi, "*Lolita* in History," *American Literature* 75, no. 3 (2003): 629–53; Will Norman, *Nabokov, History, and the Texture of Time* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 104–29.

36. Nabokov, *Lolita*, 56. Mizruchi, "*Lolita* in History," 633, 639.

37. Nabokov, *Lolita*, 146–47, 153.

38. Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 20.

39. Kerouac, *On the Road*, 291.

40. See Will Norman, "*Lolita*'s Time Leaks and Transatlantic Decadence," *European Journal of American Culture* 28, no. 2 (2009): 185–204.

41. Kerouac, *On the Road*, 291.

42. David Riesman, with Nathan Glaser and Reuel Denney, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1950), 18, 274.

43. David Castronovo, "Nabokov's America," *New England Review* 23, no. 2 (2002): 40–41.

44. Bowlby, *Shopping with Freud*, 70. Dana Brand argued that Humbert permits "his aestheticism to degenerate into a version of the consumerism against which it served as a shield." Brand, "The Interaction of Aestheticism and American Consumer Culture in Nabokov's *Lolita*," *Modern Language Studies* 17, no. 2 (1987): 15. Karen Jacobs goes much further: "Nabokov presumes from the start that Lolita's *and* Humbert Humbert's subjective parameters equally must be counted among mass culture's effects, rather than depicting the envelopment of either of them as the tragic crisis point of the narrative." Jacobs, *The Eye's Mind*, 279.

45. Nabokov, *Lolita*, 153, 156.

46. Wolfgang Fritz Haug, *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics: Appearance, Sexuality, and Advertising in Capitalist Society*, trans. Robert Bock (Cambridge: Polity, 1986), 52.

47. Vladimir Nabokov, *Nikolai Gogol* (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1944), 67.

48. Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 77, 66, 86.

49. Louis Aragon, *Paris Peasant*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (Boston: Exact Change, 1994), 14. Nabokov's technique of using underwater imagery to defamiliarize American mass culture is also used in Humbert's vision of a drive-through movie screen glimpsed from the road, on which "a thin phantom raised a gun, both he and his arm reduced to tremulous dishwater by the oblique angle of that receding world" (293).

50. See Leonard D. Marcus, *The American Store Window* (London: Architectural Press, 1978), 30–34.

51. Vladimir Nabokov, *Pnin* (New York: Everyman, 2004), 70.

52. Nabokov, *Lolita*, 157, 158.

53. Nabokov's association of mass culture with defecation is evident elsewhere in

his oeuvre, for example, in the coded titles of bestsellers, which are combined in *Bend Sinister* to form the injunction "Not to Flush the Toilet when Passing through Towns and Villages." Vladimir Nabokov, foreword to *Bend Sinister* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), 9–10.

54. Vladimir Nabokov, "Mademoiselle O," *Mesures* 2, April 15, 1936, 166 (my translation). For echoes of this passage in Mallarmé, see, in particular, *Igitur*'s midnight reverie, in which "the pure fire of the clock diamond glitters, the sole survivor and jewel of eternal Night." Stéphane Mallarmé, *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Mary Ann Caws (New York: New Directions, 1982), 93. The imagery of sparkling jewels can be traced back to *Volshebnik* (*The Enchanter*, composed 1939), the novella from which *Lolita* developed, and which is narrated by a jeweler.

55. Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Avon, 1971), 138.

56. Toril Moi, *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

57. Exceptions include Diane Rubenstein, "America in Simone de Beauvoir's Work"; Gary Totten, "Simone de Beauvoir's *America Day by Day*: Reel to Real," in *Issues in Travel Writing: Empire, Spectacle, and Displacement*, ed. Kristi Siegel (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 135–50. For a survey of the Beauvoir "renaissance," see Ursula Tidd, "État Présent: Simone de Beauvoir Studies," *French Studies* 62 (2008): 200–208.

58. Of all his novels, for Nabokov, *Lolita* "left me with the most pleasurable afterglow—perhaps because it is the purest of all, the most abstract and carefully contrived." Vladimir Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 47.

59. Vladimir Nabokov, *Selected Letters, 1940–1977*, ed. Dmitri Nabokov and Matthew J. Bruccoli (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), 250, 256. In *Lolita*, the formal dynamics of this image are rehearsed in the print Humbert remembers from his childhood, depicting a train rushing through the prairie, in which the eye is drawn from the details of the lamps and cowcatcher upward into the "spark-studded black smoke," which mixes with "furry thunder clouds" (26–27).

60. Jean-Paul Sartre, "American Novelists in French Eyes," *Atlantic Monthly*, August 1946, 115.

61. Beauvoir, *America Day by Day*, 88, 210.

62. Simone de Beauvoir, "An American Renaissance in France," *New York Times*, June 22, 1947, 29, 7.

63. Henri Peyre, "American Literature Through French Eyes," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 23, no. 3 (1947): 432.

64. Beauvoir, "American Renaissance," 7.

65. See, e.g., Philip Rahv, "Proletarian Literature: A Political Autopsy," in *Literature and the Sixth Sense* (London: Faber, 1970), 7–20.

66. Andrew Ross, for example, has emphasized the paradox that found early Cold War containment culture in part directed against its own homegrown popular tastes because of the way they resonated with the leftist bloc of the 1930s and therefore

with the specter of Stalinism. Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 16.

67. William Barrett, *The Truants* (New York: Anchor, 1982), 31.

68. William Phillips, *A Partisan View: Five Decades of the Literary Life* (New York: Stein and Day, 1983), 130.

69. Mary McCarthy, "Mlle Gulliver en Amérique," in *Critical Essays on Simone de Beauvoir*, ed. Elaine Marks (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1987), 45.

70. Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, 98, 10.

71. See Dana Draguniou, *Vladimir Nabokov and the Poetics of Liberalism* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2011).

72. Jean-Paul Sartre, "La Chronique de J. P. Sartre," review of *La Méprise*, by Vladimir Nabokov, *Europe*, June 15, 1939, 242 (my translation).

73. For a descriptive account of Nabokov's engagement with Sartre throughout his career, see Donald Barton-Johnson, "The Nabokov-Sartre Controversy," *Nabokov Studies* 1 (1994): 69–82.

74. Nabokov, "Sartre's First Try," 3, 19.

75. Nabokov, "Sartre's First Try," 19.

76. Clement Greenberg, "Avant-garde and Kitsch," in *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian, vol. 1, *Perceptions and Judgments, 1939–1944* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 13–14.

77. *Dear Bunny, Dear Volodya: The Nabokov-Wilson Letters, 1940–1971*, ed. Simon Karlinsky (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 240. Karlinsky's notes translate *ispravniki* as "police officials" and *narod* as "the people." Jean Valjean is a character in *Les Misérables* (1862), a novel by the French writer Victor Hugo.

78. Vladimir Nabokov, *Ada, or Ardor: A Family Chronicle* (London: Penguin, 2000), 439.

79. Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, 49.

Chapter 5. Saul Steinberg's Vanishing Trick

1. Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

2. See Harold Rosenberg, *Saul Steinberg* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf/Whitney Museum of American Art, 1978); Arthur C. Danto, introduction to *The Discovery of America*, by Saul Steinberg (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), viii–xviii; Ernst Gombrich, "The Wit of Saul Steinberg," in *The Essential Gombrich: Selected Writings on Art and Culture* (London: Phaidon, 1996), 539–45.

3. Allen Tate, "Our Cousin, Mr. Poe," in *Poe: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Robert Regan (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 40.

4. On Steinberg's association with the *New Yorker*, see Joel Smith, *Steinberg at*

"The New Yorker" (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2005); Iain Topliss, *The Comic Worlds of Peter Arno, William Steig, Charles Addams, and Saul Steinberg* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 182–253.

5. Clement Greenberg, review of the Pepsi-Cola Annual, the exhibition *Fourteen Americans*, and the exhibition *Advancing American Art*, in *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian, vol. 2, *Arrogant Purpose, 1945–1949* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 113.

6. Clement Greenberg, "Avant-garde and Kitsch," in *Collected Essays*, vol. 1, *Perceptions and Judgments, 1939–1944* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 13.

7. Jean vanden Heuvel, "Straight from the Hand and Mouth of Steinberg," *Life*, December 10, 1965, 66.

8. Matthew Sparke, *In the Space of Theory: Postfoundational Geographies of the Nation-State* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xvi.

9. Biographical information for this chapter is gathered from Joel Smith, *Illuminations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Deidre Bair, *Saul Steinberg* (New York: Doubleday, 2012); Mario Tedeschini Lalli, "Descent from Paradise: Saul Steinberg's Italian Years (1933–1941)," *Quest: Issues in Contemporary Jewish History* 2 (2011), www.quest-cdecjournal.it/focus.php?id=221.

10. Henry C. Pitz, "Saul Steinberg: Mad, Savage, Enigma?" *American Artist* 15 (February 1951): 41.

11. Costas Douzinas, "The Metaphysics of Cosmopolitanism," in *After Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Rosi Braidotti, Patrick Hanafin, and Bolette B. Blaagaard (London: Routledge, 2013), 59.

12. On this transition, see Smith, *Illuminations*, 52–63.

13. John Ashbery, "Saul Steinberg: The Stamp of Genius," *ARTnews* 68, no. 7 (1969): 45.

14. William Barrett, *The Truants* (New York: Anchor, 1982), 32.

15. Barrett, *Truants*, 32.

16. Saul Steinberg to Aldo Buzzi, June 12, 1983. Saul Steinberg, *Lettere a Aldo Buzzi* (Milan: Adelphi, 2002), English translation by John Shepley (through 1978) and James Marcus (1979–99), commissioned by the Saul Steinberg Foundation, typescript at the foundation. This English translation henceforth abbreviated as *LAB.*

17. Barrett, *Truants*, 58. On the idea of 1945 as a watershed moment in American art history, see Katy Siegel, *After '45: America and the Making of Contemporary Art* (New York: Reaktion, 2011), 18–46.

18. Saul Steinberg to Aldo Buzzi, November 18, 1945, *LAB.*

19. Alfred H. Barr, quoted in MoMA Press Release, "Mondrian Exhibit Opens at Museum of Modern Art," March 19, 1945, in MoMA Press Release Archives, www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/980/releases/MOMA_1945_0014_1945-03-19_45319-11.pdf?2010.

20. George Grosz, *A Small Yes and a Big No*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (London: Allison and Busby, 1982), 192.

21. The term "Cultureburg" is used in Tom Wolfe, *The Painted Word* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975), 73.

22. Howard Devree, "It's Funny—But Is It Art?" *New York Times Magazine*, September 8, 1946, 20.

23. Thomas Craven, *Cartoon Cavalcade* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1943), 242.

24. Clement Greenberg, "Steig's Gallery," review of *The Lonely Ones*, by William Steig, in *Collected Essays*, 1:138.

25. Russell Lynes, "The Tastemakers," *Harper's Magazine* 194, no. 1165 (June 1947): 481.

26. Russell Lynes, "Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow," *Harper's Magazine* 198, no. 1185 (February 1949): 19–28; Clement Greenberg, "Avant-garde and Kitsch," *Partisan Review* 6, no. 5 (1939): 34–49, repr. in *Collected Essays*, 1:5–22; Dwight Macdonald, "A Theory of Popular Culture," *Politics* 1, no. 1 (1944): 20–23.

27. John Jones, interview with Saul Steinberg, October 12, 1965, "John Jones Interviews with Artists, 1965," transcript, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, p. 2. Copy held by the Saul Steinberg Foundation. Archives of American Art is henceforth abbreviated as AAA.

28. F-R Publishing Corporation, "The New Yorker: Editorial Policy and Purpose" (New York, 1946), 3, quoted in Mary F. Corey, *The World Through a Monocle: "The New Yorker" at Midcentury* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 10.

29. On criticism of *New Yorker* "sophistication," see Ben Yagoda, *About Town: "The New Yorker" and the World it Made* (New York: Scribner, 2000), 237–38.

30. Aline B. Louchheim, "Steinberg: Artist and Humorist," *New York Times*, February 3, 1952, p. X9.

31. Rosalind Krauss, "Grids," *October* 9 (1979): 50.

32. Krauss, "Grids," 50.

33. On Greenberg's influence on the next generation of art critics and historians, see Jonathan Harris, *Writing Back to Modern Art: After Greenberg, Fried, and Clark* (London: Routledge, 2005).

34. Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon," in *Collected Essays*, 1:32, 34.

35. Wolfe, *Painted Word*, 45.

36. Michael Fried, "Three American Painters: Noland, Olitski, Stella," in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 232.

37. Several of these were published in "The City by Steinberg," *Flair* 1, no. 1 (1950): 74–91.

38. Krauss, "Grids," 52.

39. Vladimir Nabokov, "On a Book Entitled *Lolita*," *Encounter* (April 1959), 76.

40. Krauss, "Grids," 60.

41. Saul Steinberg, transcript of taped interview with Rolf Karrer-Kharberg, 1966, box 100, folder "Correspondence 1968–69," the Saul Steinberg Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, p. 2. The Saul Steinberg Papers henceforth abbreviated as SSP.

42. Selden Rodman, *Conversations with Artists* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1957), 182.

43. On Steinberg's relationship to these architects in the early 1950s, see Bair, *Saul Steinberg*, 214–15.

44. On the compositional history of this drawing, see Smith, *Illuminations*, 239, n. 93.

45. Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time, and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 499. Steinberg wrote to Buzzi on June 10, 1948, of reading *Mechanization Takes Command* by "Giedion, the great connoisseur" (*LAB*).

46. Giedion, *Space, Time, and Architecture*, 499–500.

47. "Regulating lines/Of the fateful birth of architecture./The obligation to order. The regulating line is a guarantee against arbitrariness. It brings satisfaction to the mind." Le Corbusier, *Towards an Architecture*, trans. John Goodman (London: Frances Lincoln, 2008), 86.

48. Saul Steinberg, 1953 datebook, box 3, SSP.

49. Saul Steinberg, "Built in U.S.A.: Postwar Architecture, 1945–52," *ARTnews* 51, no. 10 (1953): 16.

50. Steinberg, "Built in U.S.A.," 19.

51. Sibyl Maholy-Nagy, review of *The Passport* by Saul Steinberg, *Progressive Architecture* 3 (1955): 220.

52. On Steinberg's graph-paper architecture drawings, see also Timothy M. Rohan, "Challenging the Curtain Wall: Paul Rudolph's Blue Cross and Blue Shield Building," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 66, no. 1 (March 2007): 87; Emmanuel Petit, *Irony, or the Self-Critical Opacity of Postmodern Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 66–69.

53. Saul Steinberg with Aldo Buzzi, *Reflections and Shadows*, trans. John Shepley (New York: Random House, 2002), 56–58.

54. For an example, see *Techniques at a Party* in Smith, *Illuminations*, cat. 26.

55. Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1994), 10.

56. Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 20.

57. Steinberg, "Built in U.S.A.," 16.

58. On Moses's involvement in the planning of the UN Headquarters, see Hilary Ballon and Kenneth T. Jackson, eds., *Robert Moses and the Modern City: The Transformation of New York* (New York: Norton, 2007), 311–13.

59. Ballon and Jackson, ed., *Robert Moses*, 122–29, 244–50.

60. Neither was his criticism of Moses limited to the 1950s. In 1974, the *New Yorker* published a series of excerpts from Robert Caro's new biography of Moses, accompanied by Steinberg's drawings of desolate gridded cityscapes. See, e.g., Robert Caro, "The Power Broker II: If the Ends Doesn't Justify the Means, What Does?" *New Yorker*, July 29, 1974, 17.

61. Perry Miller, "The End of the World," *William and Mary Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (1951): 172–91. My attention was drawn to this essay by Siegel, *Since '45*, 19.

62. John Gruen, interview for *ARTnews*, January 19, 1978, typescript, box 67, SSP. Transcript at the Saul Steinberg Foundation.

63. Piet Mondrian, *The New Life, the New Art: The Complete Writings of Piet Mondrian*, ed. and trans. Harry Holtzman and Martin S. James (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 324.

64. Mondrian, *New Life*, 329, 326.

65. Smith, *Illuminations*, 35.

66. Danto, introduction to *The Discovery of America*, viii.

67. Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Myth and Symbol* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950).

68. Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (New York: Doubleday, 1957), 4–5.

69. Rosenberg, *Saul Steinberg*, 10, 15. See also Charles Simic's more recent remarks: "Steinberg was like an old-time explorer." Simic, "Steinberg's Bazaar," in Smith, *Illuminations*, 15.

70. Steinberg to Buzzi, October 3, 1951, and July 30, 1958, *LAB.* The 1951 letter likely alludes to Steinberg's concern that, since he was still on inactive service, he would be called up for service in the ongoing Korean War.

71. Robert Hughes, "The World of Steinberg," *Time*, April 17, 1978, 92.

72. Paul Cummings, interview with Saul Steinberg for Archives of American Art Oral History Program, March 27, 1973, transcript, Saul Steinberg interviews, AAA, p. 4. Copy held by the Saul Steinberg Foundation.

73. On Steinberg's experience of anti-Semitism in Italy, see Tedeschini Lalli, "Descent from Paradise."

74. See Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, trans. Assenka Oksiloff (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2006).

75. Harold Ross to Elmer Davis, November 5, 1942, in Thomas Kunkel, ed., *Letters from the Editor: "The New Yorker"'s Harold Ross* (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 191.

76. Clayton D. Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors: America's Crusade Against Nazi Germany* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 136.

77. For examples and discussion of these drawings, see Smith, *Illuminations*, 31–33.

78. See Smith, *Steinberg at "The New Yorker,"* 50–57.

79. On the *New Yorker* and luxury travel in the early 1950s, see Fiona Green, "Elizabeth Bishop in Brazil and *The New Yorker*," *Journal of American Studies* 46, no. 4 (2012): 803–29.

80. Harold Ross to Saul Steinberg, November 19, 1943, in Kunkel, *Letters from the Editor*, 227.

81. Timothy Brennan, "Internationalism and Cosmopolitanism," *New Left Review* 7 (2001): 81.

82. Saul Steinberg to Hedda Sterne, December 2, 1943; February 14, 1944; April 18, 1944. The wartime correspondence between Steinberg and Sterne is available on microfilm reel 144, the Hedda Sterne Papers, AAA.

83. Steinberg to Sterne, March 11, 1943, Sterne Papers, AAA.

84. Steinberg to Sterne, December 1, 1943, Sterne Papers, AAA.

85. Timothy Mitchell, "Society, Economy, and the State Effect," in *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader*, ed. Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 173.

86. See David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 263–67.

87. Steinberg to Sterne, July 10, 1943, Sterne Papers, AAA.

88. For examples of Steinberg's use of American iconic figures, see Smith, *Steinberg at "The New Yorker,"* 198–209; for one of his late maps, see Smith, *Illuminations*, cat. 90.

89. Akhil Gupta, "Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics and the Imagined State," in *The Anthropology of the State*, 231.

90. John Jones, interview with Saul Steinberg, 14. See also his comments to Grace Glueck in 1970: "I'm art with a purpose and the purpose is political." Glueck, "The Artist Speaks: Saul Steinberg," *Art in America* (November–December 1970): 117.

91. Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), xix; Nicholas Nabokov, "Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century: Progress Report," December 17, 1971, ser. 3, box 48, folder 9, Congress for Cultural Freedom Archive, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. Quoted in Giles Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA and Post-war American Hegemony* (London: Routledge, 2002), 134.

92. Grace Glueck, "The 20th-Century Artists Most Admired by Other Artists," *ARTnews* 76, no. 9 (1977): 101.

93. John Jones, interview with Saul Steinberg, 14.

94. Carleton S. Coon, "Interview with Lt. (j.g.) Steinberg of MO, 8 November 1944," RG 226, entry 99, box 48, folder 2, "Medto-Nato Anthology," National Archives, Washington, DC. Copy held at Saul Steinberg Foundation.

95. The AJC had commissioned ten years previously the sociological study *The Authoritarian Personality*, to which Adorno had contributed a chapter on anti-Semitism.

96. Saul Steinberg, interview by Raymond Rosenthal and Moishe Ducovny, late July–August 1960, American Jewish Committee Oral History Collection **P, Oral History Box 74, #4, transcript, New York Public Library, locator 2-53. Copy held by the Saul Steinberg Foundation. Also available at http://digitalcollections.nypl.org.

97. Steinberg, interview with Rosenthal and Ducovny, locator 3-35.

98. Steinberg, interview with Rosenthal and Ducovny, locator 5-171.

99. For examples, see the *New Yorker* covers for January 17, 1959; January 16, 1965; and November 11, 1967; Smith, *Illuminations*, cat. 53, 62, 66; Smith, *Steinberg at "The New Yorker,"* 168.

100. Steinberg's friends Alexander Calder, Dwight Macdonald, and Saul Bellow were members of the ACCF, while Nicola Chiaromonte was a leading figure in the CCF. On both organizations, see Peter Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe* (New York: Free Press, 1989).

101. On intellectual survival strategies in the Cold War, see Scott-Smith, *Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 84–85.

102. C. Wright Mills, "The Social Role of the Intellectual" [1944], in *Power, Politics, and People: The Collected Essays of C. Wright Mills*, ed. Irving Louis Horowitz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 292–304; Irving Howe, "The Age of Conformity" [1954], in *A World More Attractive: A View of Modern Literature and Politics* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 254–81; Christopher Lasch, "The Cultural Cold War," *Nation*, September 11, 1967, 198–212.

103. Clement Greenberg, "The Present Prospects of American Painting and Sculpture," in *Collected Essays*, 2:170.

104. See Melissa Renn, "*The Americans* Abroad: Situating Saul Steinberg's Mural for the 1958 Brussels World's Fair," in Saul Steinberg, *The Americans*, ed. Andreas Prinzing (Köln: Museum Ludwig, 2012), 21, 23.

105. Howard Cullman to President Eisenhower, November 12, 1957, National Archives, RG 43, box 22, folder "Brussels Fair '57." Quoted in Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century of Progress Expositions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 200.

106. United States Information Agency, "Proposed Thematic Treatment for United States Exhibit at Brussels World [*sic*] Fair," n.d., MIT Libraries, Institute Archives and Special Collections, Max Frank Millikan Papers, MC 188, folder 119. Quoted in Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 197.

107. Monica Sassatelli, "Festivals, Museums, Exhibitions: Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism in the Cultural Public Sphere," in Gerard Delanty, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Cosmopolitanism Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 238.

108. Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 209.

109. Harold Ross to Saul Steinberg, November 7, 1951, box 22, folder "Special Correspondence," SSP.

110. T. J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999), 374.

111. Steinberg to Buzzi, July 30, 1958: "Never [again] will I work for governments," *LAB.*

112. Renn, "*The Americans* Abroad," 41.

113. Renn, "*The Americans* Abroad," 29.

114. See Smith, *Steinberg at "The New Yorker,"* 41–43.

115. Andrew Gibson, *Joyce's Revenge: History, Politics, and Aesthetics in* Ulysses (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

116. Walter H. Waggoner, "We Look at Them, They Look at Us," *New York Times Magazine*, May 11, 1958, 13. On the lukewarm reception of *The Americans*, see Renn, "*The Americans* Abroad," 57–59.

117. Saul Steinberg, interview with Adam Gopnik, word-processed script, likely date 1991, with annotations, box 32, folder "Annotated Interview between SS and AG," SSP, 8. This interview appeared in French translation as Adam Gopnik, "Le Nain de la Maternelle," *Egoïst* 1, no. 12 (1992): 100–104. In the original English typescript, the word "virus" appears as a handwritten annotation by Saul Steinberg, replacing the word "amateur," crossed out.

118. Steinberg to Buzzi, January 10, 1958, *LAB.*

119. See Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 39.

120. Saul Steinberg, interview, August 6, 1965, typescript of taped interview, box 15, folder "Tape Jean Van," SSP, locator 9A-1.

121. Steinberg, *Reflections and Shadows*, 3.

122. Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 208–9.

123. Michael Paul Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, the Movie: and Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 279–80.

124. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Random House, 1952), 3.

125. Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 439.

126. Steinberg, interview with Adam Gopnik, 9.

127. Steinberg to Sterne, April 1, 1955, AAA.

128. Topliss, *Comic Worlds*, 255.

129. Irving Howe, "The Age of Conformity," 280.

130. Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2005), 37.

Conclusion. Not to Grin Is a Sin

1. See Francis Mulhern, "Culture and Society, Then and Now," *New Left Review* 55 (2009): 31–45.

2. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 131.

3. Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2005), 53.

4. See Raymond Williams, "Literature and Society," in *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays* (London: Verso, 1997), 20.

5. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 133, 132. Further citations of this work are given in the text.

6. Williams, "Literature and Sociology," 24–25.

7. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 132.

8. Mary Esteve, "Postwar Pastoral: The Art of Happiness in Philip Roth," in *American Literature's Aesthetic Dimensions*, ed. Cindy Weinstein and Christopher Looby (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 331.

9. Mary Esteve, "Queer Consumerism, Straight Happiness: Highsmith's 'Right Economy,'" *Post-45 Peer Reviewed*, December 18, 2012, http://post45.research.yale.edu/2012/12/queer-consumerism-straight-happiness-highsmiths-right-economy/.

10. Vivasvan Soni, *Mourning Happiness: Narrative and the Politics of Modernity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), 412, 259.

11. Esteve, "Postwar Pastoral," 332.

12. C. L. R. James, *American Civilization*, ed. Anna Grimshaw and Keith Hart (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 166.

13. James, *American Civilization*, 184.

14. C. L. R. James to Maxwell Geismar, April 11, 1961, in *The C. L. R. James Reader*, ed. Anna Grimshaw (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 279–80.

15. C. L. R. James to Constance Webb, September 1, 1943, in *The C. L. R. James Reader*, 130. Further citations of this letter are given in the text.

16. *The C. L. R. James Reader*, 129; Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 132.

17. Simone de Beauvoir, *America Day by Day*, trans. Carol Cosman (London: Victor Gollanz, 1996), 36.

18. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 151.

19. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 112.

20. Raymond Chandler, *Stories and Early Novels: Pulp Stories, The Big Sleep, Farewell My Lovely, The High Window*, ed. Frank McShane (New York: Library of America, 1995), 722. Further citations of this work are given in the text.

21. Sara Ahmed, "Multiculturalism and the Promise of Happiness," *New Formations* 63 (Winter 2007–2008): 125.

22. Vladimir Nabokov, *The Annotated Lolita*, ed. Alfred Appel Jr. (London: Penguin, 1995), 293.

23. Ahmed, "Multiculturalism and the Promise of Happiness," 126.

24. Vladimir Nabokov, *Nikolai Gogol* (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1944), 64.

25. Nabokov, *Nikolai Gogol*, 66–67.

26. Nabokov, *Annotated Lolita*, 142. Further citations of this work are given in the text.

27. In a shadowgraph, familiar objects are discerned in unfamiliar and distorted form through their shadows rather than being viewed directly, which again echoes Beauvoir's reference to the Platonic cave.

28. Hannah Arendt, "We Refugees," in *Hitler's Exiles: Personal Stories from the Flight from Nazi Germany to America*, ed. Mark M. Anderson (New York: New Press, 1998), 254. Further citations of this work are given in the text.

29. Georgio Agamben, "We Refugees," *Symposium* 49, no. 2 (1995): 116.

30. Joshua Rayman, "Adorno's American Reception," *Telos* 149 (2009): 16.

31. Edward A. Shils, "Authoritarianism: 'Right' and 'Left,'" in *Studies in the Scope and Method of "The Authoritarian Personality*," ed. Richard Christie and Marie Jahoda (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1954), 43.

32. On Steinberg's masks, see Joel Smith, *Saul Steinberg: Illuminations* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 148–51.

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Plate 1a (*top*). Joseph Stella, *Brooklyn Bridge,* 1919–20. Oil on canvas, 84 × 76 in. Yale University Art Gallery.

Plate 1b (*bottom*). Man Ray, *Belle Haleine, Eau de Violette* (*Beautiful Breath, Veil Water*), 1920s. Gelatin silver print, 4 1/2 × 3 1/2 in. Christie's Images Limited. © Man Ray Trust / ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2015. Photo: © 2015. Christie's Images, London / Scala, Florence.

Plate 2. George Grosz, *New York: Chameleon City: Broadway—Or the Place Pigalle, Paris.* Published in *Vanity Fair* 43, no. 3 (November 1934): 37. © Estate of George Grosz, Princeton, NJ / DACS 2015.

Plate 3. George Grosz, *Myself and New York,* 1957. Collage on cardboard, 12 × 10 2/5 in. Estate of George Grosz. © Estate of George Grosz, Princeton, NJ / DACS 2015.

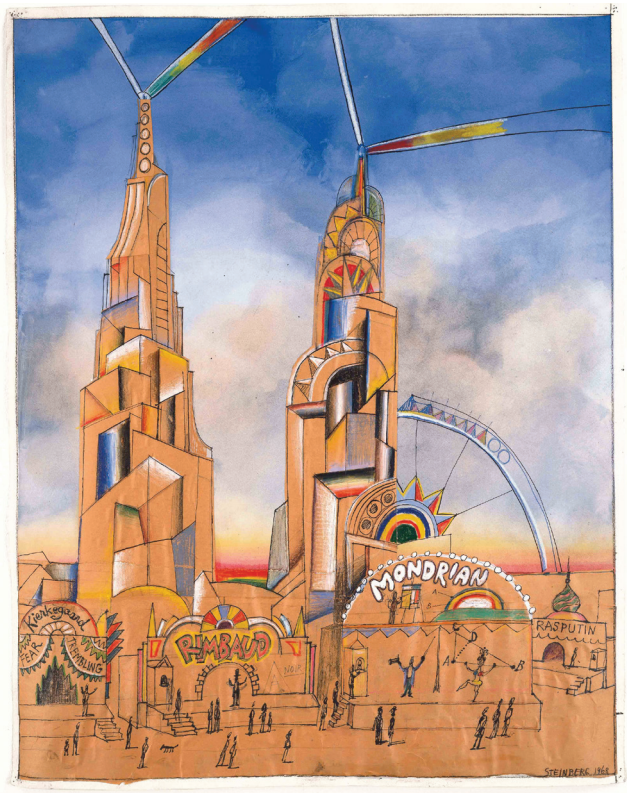

Plate 4. Saul Steinberg, *Luna Park,* 1968. Collage, crayon, and watercolor on paper, 29 × 23 in. Private collection. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Plate 5. Saul Steinberg, *Graph Paper Architecture,* 1954. Ink and collage on paper, 14 1/2 × 11 1/2 in. Collection of Leon and Michaela Constantiner. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Plate 6a (*top*). Saul Steinberg, *The City,* 1954. Ink, watercolor, crayon, and pencil on paper, 22 1/2 × 28 1/2 in. The Saul Steinberg Foundation, New York. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Plate 6b (*bottom*). Saul Steinberg, *Bank Street (Three Banks),* 1975. Ink, pencil, colored pencil, crayon, watercolor, gouache, and rubber stamps on paper, 18 7/8 × 22 1/2 in. The Saul Steinberg Foundation, New York. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Plate 7. Saul Steinberg, *The Americans,* 1958. Detail from *Downtown—Big City.* Collage on photographic background, 118 × 35 in. Musée royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Plate 8. Inge Morath, from "The Mask Series by Saul Steinberg," 1962. Masks by Saul Steinberg. © The Saul Steinberg Foundation © The Estate of Inge Morath / Magnum Photos.